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Index to volume 78

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Compiled by Mrs N. D. Blamire

Entries are in single list with reference to:

(1) every significant mention of each species, not only in titles, but also within the text of papers, notes and letters, including all those appearing in such lists as the 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1984', but excluding those in 'Recent reports', 'News and comment', requests and reviews;

(2) scientific nomenclature under generic names only and following *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1984);

(3) authors of all papers, notes, reviews and letters, and photographers; papers are referred to by their titles, other contributions as 'note on', 'review of', etc.;

(4) a few subject headings, i.e. 'Announcements', 'Breeding', 'Editorials', 'Field characters', 'Food', 'Migration', 'News and comment', 'Obituaries', 'Rarities Committee', 'Recent reports', 'Requests', 'Roosting' and 'Voice';

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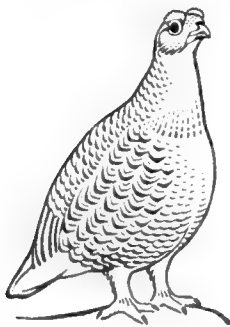
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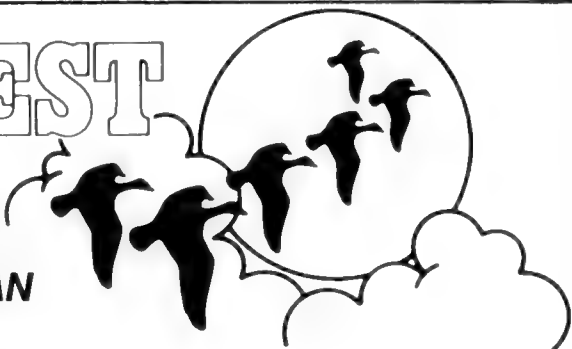
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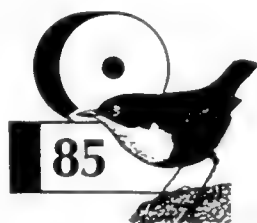
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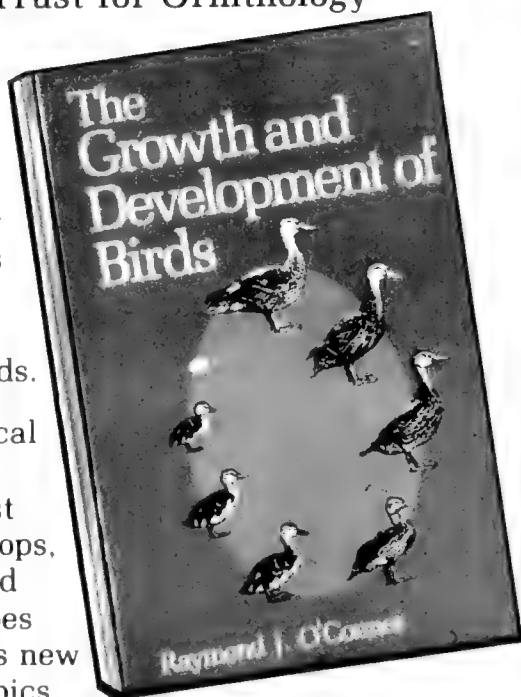
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(D429)

British Birds

VOLUME 78 NUMBER 1 JANUARY 1985

Editorial

We have once before devoted a large part of one issue to the birds and birdwatching opportunities of a single country (Ireland: *Brit. Birds* 73: 57-102). This time, we have ventured farther afield—indeed right outside our normal sphere of the West Palearctic—to present a paper on Thailand.

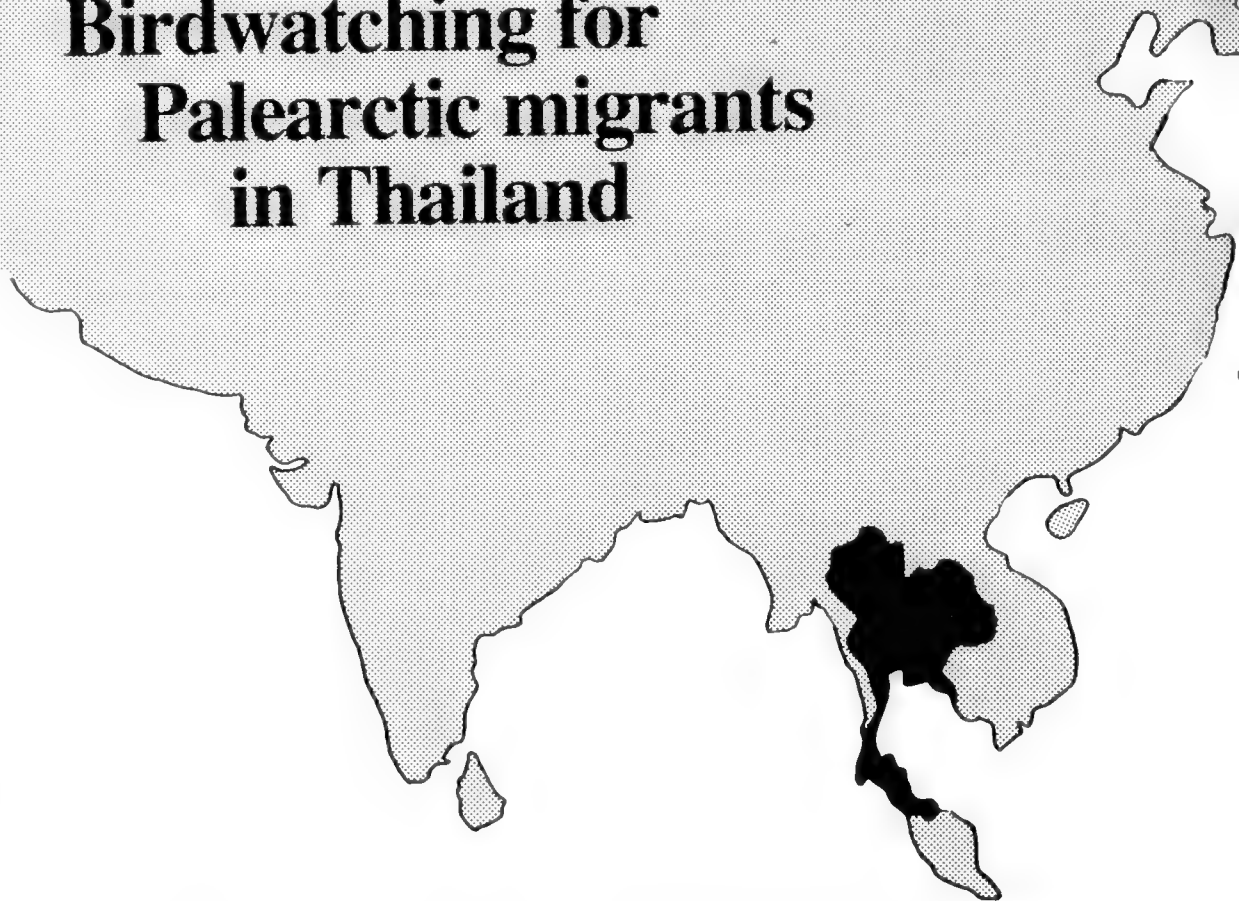
There are several reasons for this choice. An increasing number of British and other west European ornithologists (as well as many from North America) have recognised that Thailand provides excellent opportunities for seeing Siberian birds (in non-breeding plumage, on their wintering grounds or on passage) in very pleasant surroundings. Although hot, the Thai winter is tolerable, especially away from the coastal lowlands. Access is easy: visas are currently not needed for stays of under 15 days and can be obtained without undue red-tape for longer trips; and Bangkok is a major international airport. In comparison with air travel within Europe, inter-continental flights are nowadays real bargains. Many of the best birding areas can be reached on good roads, yet the number of local birdwatchers is few, so that visitors can make exciting discoveries which are genuine contributions to scientific knowledge. The Thai people are friendly and welcoming, but with none of the over-inquisitiveness which can mar birdwatching near habitations in many other Eastern countries. Thai food—recalling Chinese and Indian, but quite distinct from each—is recognised both for its excellence (it need not be unduly hot if you know what not to order) and for its cheapness. Indeed, this latter point can help to compensate for the cost of getting to Thailand. For the English-speaking birdwatcher, it is very convenient to find that English is the second language, used on many signs, as well as being spoken by a surprising number of Thais. They even drive on the left! Thus, one can watch a fascinating mixture of exotic and Palearctic birds in the pleasant semi-tropical climate of a very Oriental country, but with all (or most of) the convenience for birdwatching that one would expect of Scotland or Sweden.

We believe that the popularity of Thailand as a destination for Western birdwatchers in search of Siberian birds will increase. Elsewhere in this issue (pages 53-54), we announce a special, flexible 'package' offered by Thai Airways International to *British Birds* readers. We have also negotiated an additional free luggage allowance for *British Birds* subscribers on Thai International flights to or from Bangkok or elsewhere (see page 54).

We are most grateful to Dr Boonsong Lekagul, Philip D. Round and Kamol Komolphalin for all their work, which has resulted in this valuable summary of birdwatching opportunities in Thailand.

The cost of this special Thailand paper has been substantially subsidised by the revenue from the associated advertising. Eds

Birdwatching for Palearctic migrants in Thailand



Boonsong Lekagul, Philip D. Round and Kamol Komolphalin

Among Asian birdwatching destinations, Thailand has shown a very recent upsurge in popularity among European birdwatchers due partly to its easy accessibility (it is a major tourist destination) and partly to its immensely rich avifauna. Approximately 885 bird species have so far been recorded in Thailand, including a wealth of resident Indo-Chinese, Indo-Burmese and Malaysian species, a both resident and migrant Sino-Himalayan component, and a great many winter visitors from the Palearctic. This last group is usually of most immediate interest to European birders, as the visitor can gain experience with species which are actual or potential rare migrants to the Western Palearctic yet which are common and widespread in Thailand during the winter months. In some respects, experience gained in Thailand may be more valuable than that from India or Nepal, as the races of many common winter visitors are more often the same as those which occur as vagrants in Europe. For example, the commonest race of Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* wintering in Thailand is *P. i. inornatus*, whereas that in most of India is *P. i. humei*.

While Palearctic-African migration has received extensive study (Moreau 1972; Curry-Lindahl 1981), patterns of migration into southern and southeastern Asia are less well known, and a large proportion of existing information was collected during the Migratory Animal Pathological Survey (1963-71) which was funded by the US Army. During this programme, over 1 million birds of 1,218 resident and migrant species

were ringed in eastern Asia, 185,000 of them in Thailand, and the results summarised in McClure (1974). Other recent seminal papers are those of Medway (1976) and Nisbet (1976).

The aims of this paper are to provide a broad perspective on the ecology and status of some migrant Palearctic birds in Thailand and to provide birdwatching guidance for the prospective visitor. Nomenclature follows *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1978), and King *et al.* (1975) or Voous (1977) for species not listed therein.

Location and topography

Thailand (513,517 km²) covers an area only slightly smaller than France, and extends from 5°45' N to 20°30' N, and 97°30' E to 105°45' E (roughly 1,500 km from north to south and 800 km from east to west). The country can be divided into three geological provinces. The Central Plains, which extend to the coast in the vicinity of Bangkok, consist of a huge, marshy alluvial floodplain. Almost the entire northeastern region consists of a raised, dry plateau (the Korat Plateau) with poor soils derived from sands, clays and salt deposits. Along the western margin of the country there is a chain of mountains, of mostly granitic and metamorphic rocks with an average height of 1,000-2,000 m, which continues to the south, forming the backbone of the Malay Peninsula. The period of uplift during the Tertiary epoch which raised both the northeastern plateau and the western mountains also pushed up intrusive rocks and much limestone, which occur as outcrops around the margins of the higher mountain ranges. There are many such outcrops in the western part of the country, throughout the Central Plains (plate 1) and among the mountains of moderate elevation

1. Typical scene in Thailand's Central Plains: rice-paddy in foreground and limestone outcrops in distance, Ratburi Province, August 1981 (*P. D. Round*)



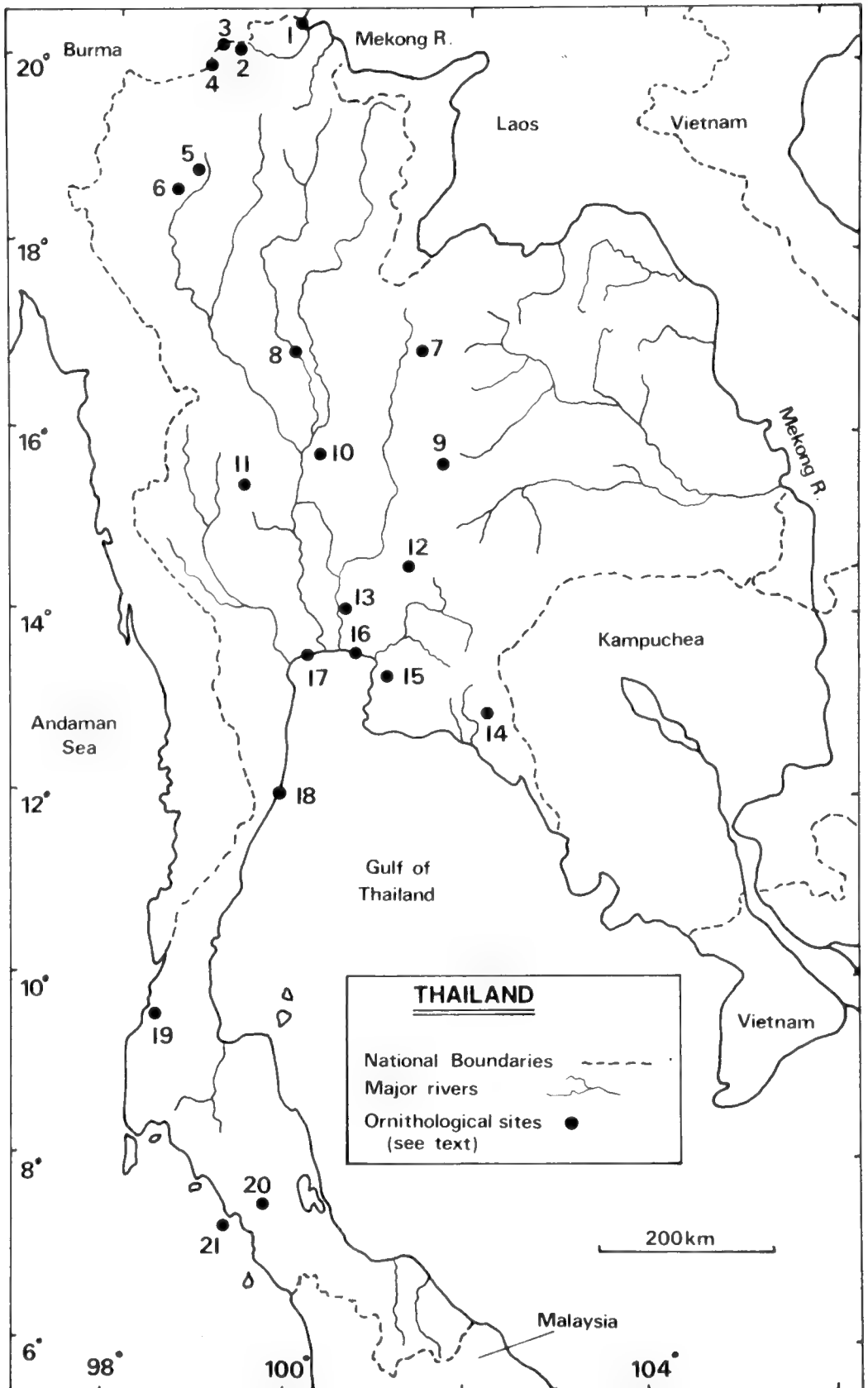


Fig. 1. Map of Thailand showing major rivers and location of 21 birdwatching sites (pp. 30-36)

(the Phetchabun Range) at the western rim of the Korat Plateau. In southeast Thailand, the isolated mountains of Khao Soi Dao rise in a westward extension of the Elephant and Cardamom Mountains of south-west Kampuchea, to 1,670m.

The west and northwest parts of the country mostly drain into the Rivers Mae Klong and Chao Phraya respectively, while the extreme north and the northeast areas drain into the Mekong.

Climate

Thailand has a tropical, monsoonal climate, with a pronounced dry season. Most of the rain falls from May to October, during the southwest monsoon. The southern peninsula and the southeast also receive some rain from the northeast monsoon, from November to January, and in some parts annual rainfall exceeds 4,000mm. Lowlands in central Thailand receive around 1,200-2,000mm, while in the drier west, northwest and northeast rainfall averages 1,000-1,400mm per year. Temperatures are influenced by the relative proximity to the sea and by the regularity of the rainfall. Around Bangkok, daytime temperatures usually range from 26-36°C, while in the north and northeast the variation is more marked. Lowland temperatures may rise to over 40°C in the hottest month (April) and sometimes fall to 10°C in winter, when ground frosts may be recorded on the higher hills.

Habitats for birds

The great variation in topography and climate have led to the development of a complex mosaic of different forest types, in which dry deciduous forests give way, with increasing rainfall, to a variety of broadleaved, semi-evergreen and evergreen facies, including tropical rain forest. Mangrove forests occupy sheltered intertidal areas which are provided with freshwater outflow, such as river deltas. Formerly, the only natural non-forested areas were freshwater lakes and swamps and some coastal areas.

2. Grasslands alternating with dense primary forest, Khao Yai National Park, Thailand
(*U. Treesucon*)



Man's activities have had a profound effect on the vegetation, and it is generally recognised that almost all forests in mainland Southwest Asia have been disturbed by man at some point during the last 10,000 years, ever since shifting cultivation was first practised. Typically, small areas were burnt and cleared for cultivation and then abandoned after a few years, when they would slowly be recolonised by smaller, secondary trees and shrubs, and, over a period of several human generations, would return to primary forest. In the 20th Century, concomitant with a great increase in the human population, both shifting cultivation and commercial timber exploitation have reduced cover very markedly. Thailand was probably still 70-80% forested at the end of the Second World War, but, by the end of 1980, closed canopy forest occupied only 18% of the land area, with another 5%, at most, occupied by open-canopy formations (F.A.O. 1981). Dry, deforested areas, if not cultivated, become dominated by scrub, tall lallang grass *Imperata cylindrica* and small trees. Open woodland or secondary growth may become re-established, but, typically, such areas are routinely burnt and cut over by rural people, which prevents the establishment of all but the most fire-resistant tree species. Some important dryland crops include tapioca, sugar cane, maize, tobacco and cotton.

Of Thailand's formerly huge, lowland freshwater swamps, relatively few remain today; those that do are used for irrigation purposes or support important freshwater fisheries. Although sophisticated rice cultivation techniques have been practised in Southeast Asia for perhaps 4,000 years, most major drainage works took place during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Smaller, piecemeal drainage efforts are continuing to the present time, but nevertheless a great number of small marshes remain and continue to support many wetland birds. Ricefields themselves constitute an important bird habitat which is subject to seasonal inundation.

The main habitats for land birds are set out below. Forest types have been classified following Neal (1967) and Smitinand (1967).

1. *Tropical evergreen forest*

Tropical evergreen forest is the most complex terrestrial ecosystem known to man and is found from sea level up to 1,000m in those areas which have a rainfall of at least 2,000mm spread fairly evenly throughout the year. Drier sub-types of this forest exist, however, in areas which are seasonally dry. The dominant tree species are members of the Dipterocarpaceae. The foliage is structured into layers: the ground flora is usually rather sparse; there is an understorey layer of shrubs and small trees; a continuous tree canopy occurs at 20-25m, while isolated emergent trees may be up to 50 or 60m tall. Species diversity is great, and 100 or more tree species per hectare is not unusual. Such forests support considerable numbers of Palearctic migrants, including many arboreal leaf-warblers and flycatchers and some chats, such as the Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane* (plate 18). Three types of tropical evergreen forests are recognised in Thailand:

- a. TROPICAL RAINFOREST occupies only small areas in the extreme south of the peninsula, in the least seasonal areas.
- b. SEMI-EVERGREEN FOREST occupies most of peninsular Thailand and parts



3. Edge of primary dry evergreen forest, Khao Yai National Park, Thailand (*U. Treesucon*)

of southeastern Thailand (e.g. Khao Banthat Wildlife Sanctuary; Khao Soi Dao Wildlife Sanctuary).

C. DRY EVERGREEN FOREST is the predominant type of lowland evergreen forest in Thailand and occupies considerable areas in the Phetchabun mountain range and in western Thailand. Typically, it occurs on hill slopes of intermediate elevation where the lowlands are occupied by deciduous forests (e.g. Khao Yai National Park, plates 2-4).

4. Interior of dry evergreen forest on ridgetop, Khao Yai National Park, Thailand; note relatively open appearance of forest floor (*U. Treesucon*)



Differences in the wintering bird community of such areas appear to be influenced by their geographical position rather than by any differences in their biotic structure. It must be emphasised that, to all but the experienced botanist, these three forest types appear remarkably similar.

2. Hill evergreen forest

Hill evergreen forest occurs above 1,000m, in areas where the annual rainfall exceeds 2,000mm. The dominant trees are oaks *Quercus* and chestnuts *Lithocarpus* & *Castanopsis*, and there are also many trees and shrubs of the families Rosaceae, Ericaceae and Magnoliaceae. Typically, the trees are swathed in epiphytic mosses, lichens and herbs. Hill evergreen forest can be structurally quite varied, with taller trees and dense undergrowth being found in moist stream valleys, while smaller trees and more open, thorny undergrowth occupy drier ridgetops. Hill evergreen forests occur on the higher mountains throughout the country, though it is the areas in the northwest which support the greatest variety of Palearctic migrants, including a variety of thrushes, chats, warblers and flycatchers (e.g. Doi Inthanon National Park; Doi Suthep-Pui National Park).

3. Pine forests

Two native species of pines, *Pinus kesiya* and *P. merkusii*, occur in Thailand.



Fig. 2. Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane* (Kamol Komolphalin)



5. Dry dipterocarp forest, Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Thailand, March 1984 (P. D. Round)

They are seldom found in pure stands, but are generally mixed in with oaks and other hill evergreen tree species on the drier ridgetops. Pinewoods support relatively few bird species, and Yellow-browed Warblers and Red-breasted Flycatchers *Ficedula parva* are the only Palearctic species which are common in such habitats.

4. Mangrove forests

Mangroves are found only in relatively sheltered areas between the level of the peak spring tides and the lowest neap tides, which are provided with freshwater outflow. The most extensive mangroves occur on the west peninsular coast, though considerable areas are also found in the Gulf of Thailand. A number of Palearctic migrants winter commonly in mangroves, including Dusky Warblers *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, Pale-legged Leaf Warblers *P. tenellipes*, Arctic Warblers *P. borealis* and Brown Flycatchers *M. latirostris*. A much greater variety may be found here on spring and autumn passage, occasionally including such species as Siberian Blue Robin (fig. 2 & plate 18) and Tiger Shrike *Lanius tigrinus*. Mangroves usually occur in association with extensive areas of mudflats, which may support huge concentrations of wintering or passage waders.

5. Deciduous forests

Deciduous forests were once much more extensive than evergreen forests in Thailand, formerly covering an area approximately twice as great. They are found in lowland areas which are highly seasonal, and many of their component tree species shed their leaves in response to water stress during the dry season. As in lowland evergreen forest, dipterocarp trees predominate. Deciduous forests may be divided into two types:

a. MIXED DECIDUOUS FOREST occurs in areas which have 1,250-2,000mm annual rainfall and are typically found in the extreme lowlands on alluvial

soils. Though these forests may contain many huge trees, the canopy is more broken than in evergreen forests and more light reaches the forest floor. This encourages a dense scrub and ground flora layer, and such forests are frequently characterised by areas of impenetrable thorny undergrowth, including much bamboo. Mixed deciduous forests support a similar variety of Palearctic migrants to evergreen forests. Both Siberian Blue Robins and Radde's Warblers *P. schwarzi* haunt the undergrowth, while Two-barred Greenish Warblers *P. plumbeitarsus* are especially found in bamboo (e.g. Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary).

b. DRY DIPTEROCARP FOREST is usually found in the driest areas, on the poorest, most porous soils, and typically occurs in the foothills, often intergrading with pines, or with dry evergreen or hill evergreen formations at their upper altitudinal limits. Dry dipterocarp forests are extremely open, with trees of relatively low stature and a dense growth of grasses usually occupying the ground layer. This is a relatively species-poor forest type, the dominant trees being two species of *Shorea* and one or two species of *Dipterocarpus* (known to many as the 'sal' forests of Northern India). Although this habitat holds many medium to large resident bird species, such as woodpeckers and treepies, it supports very few small insectivorous birds, and the only common migrant species are Radde's and Yellow-browed Warblers and Red-breasted Flycatchers (e.g. lower slopes of Doi Inthanon or Doi Suthep-Pui National Parks; Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary: plate 5).

6. *Secondary growth, scrub and grassland*

Such habitats are found where the forest has been cleared (plate 6). A great

6. Secondary growth and cleared areas at about 1,700 m, Doi Pha Hom Pok, Thailand
(*U. Treesucon*)



number of the less arboreal migrant species occur in secondary growth, and many species, such as Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* (plate 15) and most buntings *Emberiza*, winter more or less exclusively in deforested areas.

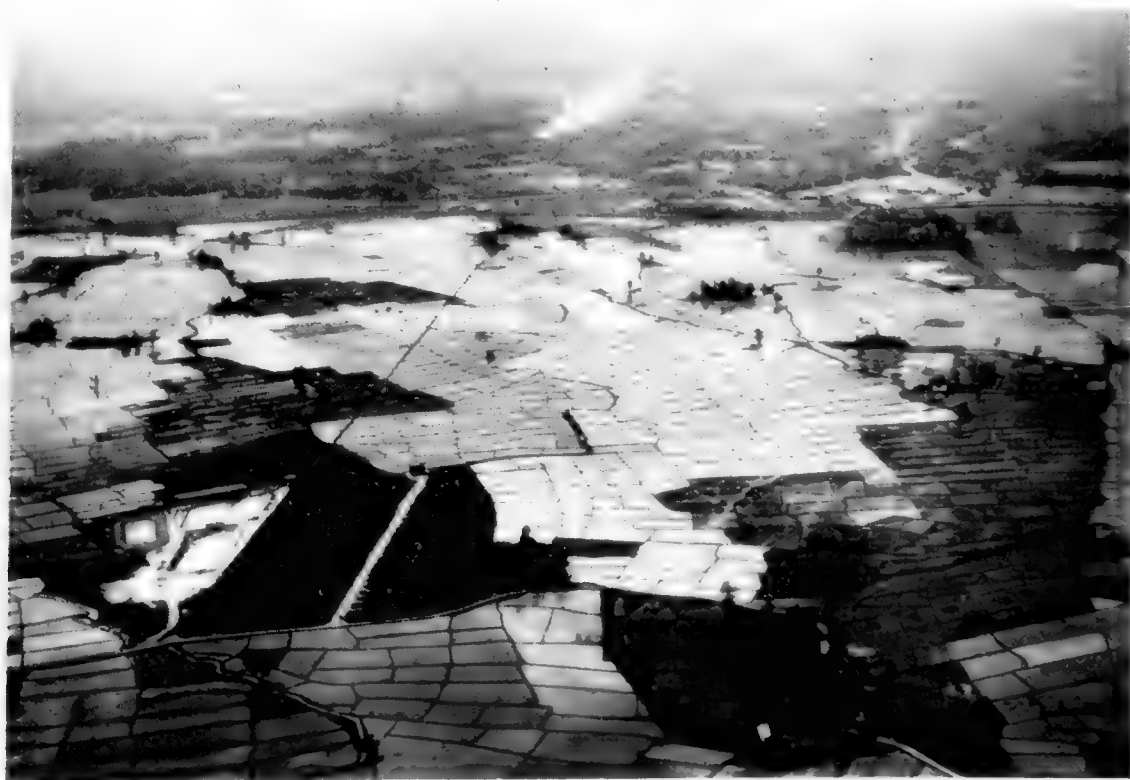
7. *Dryland crops*

Dryland crops (e.g. tapioca, maize) generally support only the most tolerant of migrant species which frequent open country, such as Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*. Buntings and occasionally wagtails will utilise sugar-cane fields as roost sites. Fruit orchards provide feeding areas for the more arboreal migrants, such as some leaf-warblers and flycatchers.

8. *Marshes and paddyfields*

Freshwater marshes support a great wealth of migrant landbirds, including pipits, wagtails, Siberian Rubythroat, Bluethroat *L. svecica*, Stonechat, *Locustella* and *Acrocephalus* warblers, Dusky Warblers and Yellow-breasted Buntings *Emberiza aureola*. Few migrant species utilise fields of standing rice, and Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* and Black-browed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps* are mostly confined to their rushy or grassy margins. Paddyfields are at their richest either when being ploughed and planted, when they support many wagtails, pipits and a variety of waders, or after harvest, when dry, prairie-like fields of stubble support Grey-headed Lapwings *Hoplopterus cinereus*, Red-throated Pipits *Anthus cervinus*, Bluethroats and buntings.

7. Aerial view near Chiang Mai, northern Thailand, showing many flooded paddyfields. February 1982 (*I. S. Robertson*)



Origins and wintering areas of Palearctic migrants

Of the total of 885 species of bird so far known for Thailand, some 262 occur only as migrants, while a further 62 species, at least, are represented both by resident and migrant populations. The vast majority of these species enter Thailand from the north during the Palearctic winter, although some

8. Rice paddies, north of Fang, northern Thailand, February 1980 (*R. F. Porter*)



intratropical migrants (e.g. Blue-winged Pitta *Pitta moluccensis*) enter Thailand as breeding visitors from the south. Some other species (mainly waterbirds, such as the Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*) are east-west migrants (McClure 1974).

Taxonomic studies have pointed to the existence of a major faunal divide in Asia along the 90th meridian, and ringing studies have subsequently confirmed that most populations of birds breeding to the east of this overwinter mainly in Southeast Asia (McClure 1974; Nisbet 1976). There are a few species, such as the Arctic Warbler and the Yellow-breasted Bunting, which, having extended their breeding ranges westward as far as Europe, may make a journey of 8,000km or more to their Southeast Asian wintering areas. Birds which inhabit a breeding area of around 21 million km² in eastern and northeastern Asia must, therefore, overwinter in a much smaller land area in Southeast Asia, to the south of the 10°C isotherm, of less than 4 million km² (excluding Australasia and New Guinea, which are reached by relatively few migrant landbirds). This helps to explain the obtrusiveness of wintering Palearctic species among the residential Oriental bird fauna in Thailand. As Southeast Asia was once almost entirely forested, wintering areas for species inhabiting open country must formerly have been severely limited.

The extreme north of Thailand supports a greater variety of Palearctic migrant passerines, particularly thrushes and warblers, than do areas farther south (table 1), and the importance of this region for migrant birds is increased still further if shorter-distance migrants from the Sino-Himalayan region are considered.

Table 1. Principal wintering areas in Thailand of Palearctic migrant passerines

Family	NUMBER OF SPECIES			
	Whole country	15-20°N	10-15°N	<10°N
Hirundines (Hirundinidae)	5	5	4	4
Wagtails (Motacillidae)	8	8	7	6
Thrushes (Turdidae)	15	12	7	4
Warblers (Sylviidae)	19	19	16	10
Flycatchers (Muscicapidae)	7	3	5	6
Shrikes (Laniidae)	3	2	2	2
Starlings (Sturnidae)	2	1	1	1
Buntings (Emberizidae)	6	6	2	1
	65	56	44	34

Observations of migration

While localities such as Fraser’s Hill in Malaysia and Dalton Pass in the Philippines are well known as sites where large numbers of night-flying migrants are attracted to lights, no such observation points have yet been discovered in Thailand. Passage of land birds is apparent when small numbers of migrants appear in uncharacteristic situations, such as city gardens, coastal mangroves and other unusual habitats or outside their usual altitudinal ranges. A well-defined spring and autumn passage of species such as Arctic Warblers, Eastern Crowned Leaf Warblers

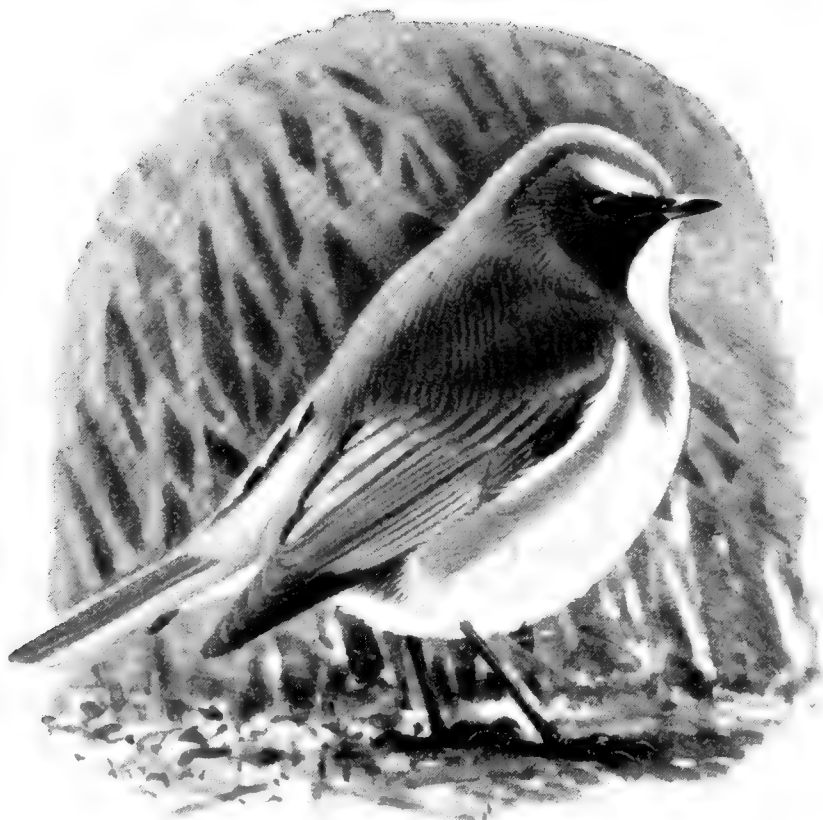


Fig. 3. Male Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (Killian Mullarney)

Phylloscopus coronatus, Yellow-rumped Flycatchers *Ficedula zanthopygia* and Tiger Shrikes (all species which winter mostly in the peninsula or farther south) is detectable around Bangkok, for example. There are also a number of observations of diurnal migration. In addition to observations of raptor passage, described below, movements of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters *Merops philippinus*, Blue-throated Bee-eaters *M. viridis*, Swallows *H. rustica* and Black Drongos *Dicrurus macrocercus* have been noted (Melville & Fletcher 1982).

Dates of migration

The earliest passerine migrant to arrive in autumn is usually the Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, a few of which appear from mid July onwards. Forest Wagtails *Dendronanthus indicus* also occur in August although there are records from as early as 21st July in Malaya (Medway & Wells 1976). Mass arrivals of Brown Shrikes *Lanius cristatus* and Stonechats take place in early September, when southward passage of Arctic and Eastern Crowned Warblers and Yellow-rumped Flycatchers is also evident. Larger migrants, such as thrushes, do not appear until October.

Various authors have commented on the lateness of the spring exodus of Palearctic migrants from Southeast Asia compared with that from Africa. Peak passage across the Sahara and into Southern Europe is in April (Fry *et al.* 1970). In Thailand, although a few species (such as Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, fig. 3) may have disappeared by early April, most migrants remain throughout the month and well into May, and may be heard in song before their departure. A late departure in spring may be favoured by the prevalence of the northeast monsoon over the South China Sea until the end

of April, and over southeastern China until even later. Late-departing birds could be at a selective advantage in avoiding flying into bad weather (Nisbet 1976). Not confronted with major geographical barriers such as long sea and desert crossings, some species may show a gradual drift northward in the late winter. Swallows ringed in Malaysia between August and January have been recovered in Bangkok in late January to early February (Medway 1973), while a few Eastern Crowned and Pale-legged Leaf Warblers usually reappear in mangroves around Bangkok in February and March.

Conservation

In Thailand, as in much of the rest of the world, habitat destruction is the major threat faced by wild bird populations. The great reduction in forest cover has restricted the distribution of many forest-dwelling species, while drainage and conversion of wetlands has adversely affected populations of waterfowl. Paradoxically, although Thailand is a Buddhist country, hunting pressure is intense, and those bird species known with certainty to have been extirpated (Giant Ibis *Pseudibis gigantea*, White-shouldered Ibis *P. davisoni*, White-winged Duck *Cairina scutulata* and Sarus Crane *Grus antigone*) have suffered from a combination of both habitat destruction and direct persecution. The extent to which migrant bird populations have been affected is not fully clear, although it is certain that the general population levels of egrets, storks (and other large waterbirds) and Black Kites *Milvus migrans*, all of which comprise both resident and migrant populations, have been markedly reduced within the last 20 years. The senior author has in the past observed thousands of wintering ducks off the coast at Bangpoo, where very few are found today. Large raptors, such as the Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*, which winter in Thailand's densely populated lowlands are still widely shot. It is not clear whether pesticides are implicated in the decline of populations of larger birds, although this seems likely.

Intertidal mudflats are very extensive in Thailand, and are undoubtedly of international importance for the huge populations of wintering and passage shorebirds which they support. Up to the present, such sites have been much less damaged by man's activities than have those in Malaysia and Singapore (Parish & Wells 1984). With increased pressure on land, however, reclamation for urban and industrial development is beginning to become apparent, while widespread cutting and conversion of mangroves to fishponds could remove protection for fragile mudflat ecosystems and lead to their erosion.

Many passerines that winter in Thailand occupy a broad range of wooded habitats, including secondary growth, and may therefore be less immediately threatened by habitat destruction than are many resident forest birds which have much more specialised requirements. While 'slash-and-burn' (shifting) cultivation is practised by poorer, landless people throughout the country, in northwestern Thailand (a key area for migrant landbirds), the problems of deforestation and habitat degradation are especially acute. There, the mountains above 1,000m are occupied by ethnically distinct groups known collectively as 'hilltribes'. Such peoples



9. Areas cleared for cultivation by hilltribes, with relict stands of forest, Doi Pha Hom Pok, Thailand, November 1983 (*U. Tressucon*)

are mostly pioneer shifting cultivators, who clear large areas of forest in order to cultivate opium as a cash crop, and their activities have reduced most remaining hill evergreen forests to a patchwork of grassland, scrub and secondary growth, with most forest cover remaining on the steepest slopes and along stream courses (plate 9). Although, up to the present time, most smaller hill birds, both resident and migrant, may still be found on those mountains where they were first identified 50 or more years ago (Round 1984), the situation needs careful monitoring, since continued burning and cutting for timber is sure to reduce still further or destroy completely many relict forest stands.

Although most bird species are nominally protected by law in Thailand, enforcement is poor. Illegal hunting has already been mentioned, but large numbers of small birds, including Swallows and Yellow-breasted Buntings, are also caught using mist-nets and sold in local markets for food. There is also a thriving and largely illegal domestic trade in cagebirds.

Thailand has, however, established a large network of protected areas, most of which are either National Parks or Wildlife Sanctuaries, comprising approximately 8% of the country's land area. All such reserves are fully protected by law and range in size from less than 50 km² to over 3,000 km². A further category of reserve is 'Non-Hunting Area'; these are usually smaller than reserves in the previous categories and often support human populations within their boundaries, but they do include some wetlands of national or international importance. While none of these areas is, at present, effectively patrolled, and while illegal hunting and habitat encroachment continues, large-scale habitat destruction within such areas has largely been halted, so that they do form a valuable basis for present and future conservation efforts.

Interest in wildlife conservation among the Thai people has increased markedly in recent years, and this is reflected by the appearance of a number of magazines which feature articles on wildlife and environment, and by the soaring numbers of visitors to National Parks.

Systematic review of main groups of migrants

Hérons, storks and ibises

Many herons and egrets are represented by both resident and migrant populations; recoveries of Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* and Purple Herons *A. purpurea* ringed in the USSR have been reported from Thailand (McClure 1974). Small flocks of Grey Herons apparently on autumn migration have been noted at Bangpoo and, in winter, flocks of up to 30 occur at Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park. Of species which occur exclusively as winter visitors, Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* and Schrenck's Little Bittern *Ixobrychus eurhythmus* are uncommon, frequenting marshes and paddyfield margins from the far north of the country to around Bangkok. There are no recent records of the Chinese Egret *Egretta eulophotes*, which is listed in the ICBP Red Data Book. A recent increase in records from the Philippines (S. Gast *in litt.*), however, may suggest that this species, which exclusively frequents coastal areas, has hitherto been overlooked.

There are only very few records of the Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, all from marshy plains in the vicinity of the Mekong River. There appear to be at least two records of the White Stork *C. ciconia* from the vicinity of Bangkok. One sighting concerned three individuals of one of the red-billed races, presumably *C. c. asiatica* (Junge & Kooiman 1951). The endangered black-billed subspecies, *C. c. boyciana*, which breeds in northeastern Asia and winters in southern China, has never been identified in Thailand. A small wintering population of the Black-necked Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* is presumed to originate from a neighbouring country rather than a Palearctic source. There is one record of Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* (Lekagul 1977).

Wildfowl

Thailand continues to be of international importance as a wintering area for wildfowl, and annual concentrations of 10,000 to 30,000 occur in two sites in the northern part of the Central Plains, while another four or five sites are each known to support totals of 5,000-10,000. The most numerous Palearctic species is the Garganey *Anas querquedula*, which usually occurs together with concentrations of the Lesser Treeduck *Dendrocygna javanica*. A few hundred Pintails *A. acuta*, together with small numbers of Wigeons *A. penelope*, Teals *A. crecca* and occasionally a few other species, may be found. A recent significant find was a concentration of 112 Baer's Pochards *Aythya baeri* on Beung Boraphet in February 1983.

Although duck populations have probably been reduced throughout much of eastern and southeastern Asia, many species are highly adaptable and spend the day on undisturbed waters, flying out to feed on ricefields after dark. In recent years, at least 5,000 Garganeys and 2,000 Lesser

Treeducks have taken to roosting on a 2-ha pond, completely surrounded by a housing estate, in the suburbs of Bangkok.

Birds of Prey

Large numbers of migrant raptors enter Southeast Asia, yet surprisingly little is known concerning their migration and wintering areas. As elsewhere, migration watches have been concentrated at straits (e.g. the Malacca Strait between Malaysia and Sumatra) and in mountain ranges (e.g. in peninsular Thailand) which tend to 'funnel' raptors, but no systematic counts have yet been made. In Thailand, there are discrete movements of Crested Honey Buzzards *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, various species of *Accipiter* (probably mostly Japanese Sparrowhawks *A. gularis* and Chinese Goshawks *A. soloensis*) and Grey-faced Buzzards *Butastur indicus*, together with small numbers of Spotted Eagles *Aquila clanga* and occasionally Short-toed Eagles *Circaetus gallicus* and Booted Eagles *Hieraaetus pennatus*. The predominant species in such movements is often a shorter-distance migrant, the Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes*. October is probably the best month for observing southbound passage, while March and April are the best months in spring.

In open lowland areas, the Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* is one of the commonest wintering raptors and all those so far identified have been of the distinctively different eastern subspecies *splonotus*. The Pied Harrier *C. melanoleucos* is found in similar, usually marshy habitats, but is markedly less common. One or two Hen Harriers *C. cyaneus* have also been identified annually in recent years, on deforested mountains in the northwest. One of the most frequently identified wintering, broad-winged raptors, in both open and wooded areas of lowlands and mountains, is the Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, erroneously described as 'rare' by Lekagul & Cronin (1974). A few Spotted Eagles are now found annually, wintering in open marshy plains, and often frequenting heronries, where they prey on waterbirds. Surprisingly, the Steppe Eagle *A. rapax nipalensis* is unknown from Thailand, but there is now one record of Imperial Eagle *A. heliaca* (K. Grace *et al. in litt.*). The Black Kite *Milvus migrans* is fairly common, and winter visitors probably outnumber residents of the race *govinda*.

Crested Honey Buzzards (which have resident as well as wintering races in Thailand) and Grey-faced Buzzards inhabit wooded areas throughout the country, but are most numerous in the peninsula. Other species which are uncommon or scarce winter visitors or migrants include Goshawk *A. gentilis*, Sparrowhawk *A. nisus*, Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Amur Falcon *F. amurensis*, Hobby *F. subbuteo* and Peregrine *F. peregrinus*. There are also a few records of Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus* and one record of Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* from the far northwest. The Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* is fairly frequent in coastal areas and freshwater marshes, and a few remain until at least June and may possibly oversummer.

Crakes and rails

Although many rails are prodigious, long-distance migrants, the status of many species is little known, owing to their secretive habits. Baillon's

Crake *Porzana pusilla* is common in open marshy areas of lowlands, but there are only very few records of Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* or Spotted Crake *P. porzana*, although both have recently been found at Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park.

Waders

Among Palearctic migrants, waders are usually of particular interest to visiting birdwatchers. A total of 55 species of wader has so far been recorded in Thailand, of which all but nine (Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemos*, Great Thick-knee *Esacus magnirostris*, Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*, Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Malaysian Plover *C. peronii*, River Lapwing *Hoplopterus duvaucelii* and Red-wattled Lapwing *H. indicus*) are represented only as winter visitors or passage migrants.

With huge areas of both intertidal and freshwater habitats, Thailand is certainly of international importance for its wintering or passage wader populations. Owing to a lack of observers, however, and the inaccessibility of intertidal mudflats and the wader roost sites along the mangrove-dominated coastlines, little attention has thus far been paid to shorebirds, and no systematic surveys of numbers and distribution have yet been carried out. Nevertheless, in recent years, a number of new species have been added to the Thai list, including Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*, Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*.

The most numerous species on intertidal areas include Lesser Sand Plovers *Charadrius mongolus* (which far outnumber the Greater *C. leschenaultii*), Red-necked Stints *Calidris ruficollis*, Curlew Sandpipers *C. ferruginea* and Marsh Sandpipers *Tringa stagnatilis*. Both Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* and Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* are also

10. Wader-watching at coastal fish pond, Samut Sakhon, near Bangkok, Thailand
(P. D. Round)



very numerous. Two species whose main winter range may lie in Thailand and which are listed in the ICBP Red Data Book are Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* and Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*. Both species have proved elusive, but an outstanding concentration of 400 Asian Dowitchers was recorded on mudflats in the Gulf of Thailand, which may be an important wintering or staging area, in April 1984. Nordmann's Greenshank may overwinter scattered at low density along both peninsular coasts, as there have been a number of sightings of one or two on open sandy beaches. The largest concentration so far recorded was a flock of ten at Ko Libong in Trang Province in March 1983. The Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* is another scarce species, one to three being occasionally encountered on the coast near Bangkok. Again, peninsular Thailand may be important as a wintering area, and a concentration of 26 was recorded at Ko Libong in March 1983. The Grey-rumped Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes* appears to be a scarce passage migrant and may be greatly overlooked as it tends to avoid large concentrations of waders on open mudflats and fishponds, frequenting rocky areas and drier mud along the upper shore, rather in the manner of a Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*.

In freshwater marshes and paddyfields, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* is the commonest species, while Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* and Little Ringed Plovers are also fairly numerous, particularly in the north. Long-toed Stints *C. subminuta* occur mostly on freshwater (and, unlike Red-necked, never venture out on to extensive mudflats), but are usually most numerous in areas immediately adjacent to the coast. Both Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Pintail Snipe *G. stenura* are extremely common winter visitors. Over 60 years ago, Forty (1923) noted that the Pintail Snipe was more numerous in the early part of the season (up to and including October), whereas the Snipe predominated throughout most of the winter. Both species are usually found together in freshwater marshes and paddyfields, but the Pintail Snipe has a slight tendency to occur in drier situations, while the Snipe outnumbers the Pintail in somewhat brackish marshes along the landward edge of the mangroves. There are no recent records of Swinhoe's Snipe *G. megala* in Thailand, which may stem in part from the continued uncertainty over its field characters (Madge 1977). In Malaysia, Swinhoe's Snipe apparently prefers more wooded situations than does Pintail Snipe (Medway & Wells 1976). The Jack Snipe *Lymnocyrtus minimus* is so far known from only one record, whereas the Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* is a frequent winter visitor, inhabiting moist forest floor and stream-sides in both evergreen and deciduous forest, from the plains to the highest elevations. There are only two records of the Wood Snipe *G. nemoricola*, from evergreen forest of high to moderate elevation in the northwest.

Gulls and terns

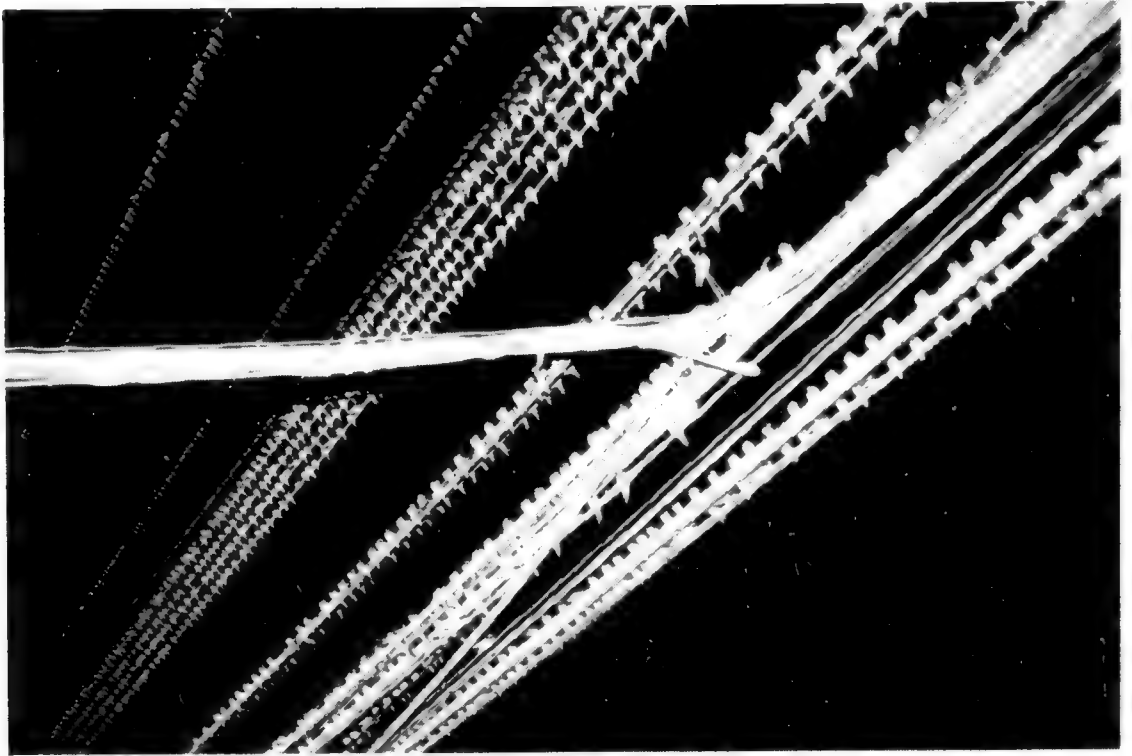
Only two species of gulls, Brown-headed *Larus brunnicephalus* (plate 11) and Black-headed *L. ridibundus*, were previously known for Thailand, although the great attention which birdwatchers have paid to gulls in recent years is starting to produce results: Herring Gull *L. argentatus* (ten



11. Adult Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*, Bangpoo, Thailand, January 1979
(P. D. Round)

records), Slender-billed Gull *L. genei* (eight records), Black-tailed Gull *L. crassirostris* (two records) and Great Black-headed Gull *L. ichthyaetus* (two records) have since been added. Most sightings have been made in the inner gulf, at Bangpoo or Samut Sakhon, which are the only sites regularly supporting large concentrations of gulls (mainly Brown-headed). Most Herring Gull sightings have been of first-winter birds, and there is still some uncertainty over the separation of immature Herring Gulls of the eastern race *L. a. vegae* from the Slaty-backed Gull *L. schistisagus* (Harrison 1983). The Herring Gull, however, is much the commoner species in Hong Kong (Webster 1975). The surprising number of Slender-billed Gull records (apart from one record in eastern Nepal, there are no other winter records east of the northwest Indian coast: Ali & Ripley 1983, Harrison 1983) could suggest that the species' breeding range extends much farther east than is at present known.

The commonest wintering tern is the Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*, which is widespread in both freshwater and coastal habitats, although it is seldom found in numbers any great distance inland. White-winged Black Terns *C. leucopterus* are much scarcer during midwinter, when most are probably farther south, but there is a well-defined spring and autumn passage through the Bangkok area. The Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* is fairly common in the inner gulf in winter, while both Gull-billed *Gelochelidon nilotica* and Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia* occur in small numbers. Although the Crested Tern *S. bergii*, which breeds in Thailand, is regular in the inner gulf, it is most often found on more open shores, in southeastern Thailand and along both peninsular coasts. The Lesser Crested Tern *S. bengalensis* is known only as a winter visitor, and all records are from the west peninsular coast, where concentrations of up to 60 have been recorded at Ko Libong.



12. Part of 200,000-strong roost of Swallows *Hirundo rustica* on wires in busy, well-lit part of Bangkok, Thailand, March 1983 (P. D. Round)

The Chinese Crested Tern *S. bernsteini* is known in Thailand only from three specimens collected in 1923, and it has been unrecorded anywhere in the world since 1937. There is, however, one recent—unconfirmed, though probably reliable—sight record (ten off the west peninsular coast in July 1980: A. Tsuji & P. Poonswad *in litt.*). There are two records of Saunders's Tern *S. saundersi* from the west coast.

Aerial-feeders

The rarest of the three *Hirundapus* species in Thailand is the Needle-tailed Swift *H. caudacutus*: there are only very few records, from forested areas of the east and southeast. This species occurs as far south as Australasia in winter and probably occurs in Thailand only on spring passage: all records have been in March or April. The Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* is fairly common in winter. It seldom occurs in large concentrations, but is usually mixed in with other species (such as Asian Palm Swifts *Cypsiurus batasiensis*, needletails and, occasionally, swiftlets *Aerodramus*) over forest and secondary growth of hilly areas.

The Swallow *Hirundo rustica* is a ubiquitous winter visitor, feeding over both forest and open country of the lowlands and hills, and a few remain throughout the summer months. An interesting feature of the Southeast Asian wintering populations is their use of urban roosts as well as more traditional sites such as reedbeds, and this has been recorded in both Thailand and Malaysia (King 1966; Medway 1973). In Bangkok, over 200,000 roost on electric wires in a very brightly lit part of the inner city (plate 12). The Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* is very much less common and is usually found over marshy plains. Most of the Red-rumped Swallows *H. daurica* that winter in Thailand belong to the heavily streaked '*striolata*'

group of races which also lack a pale dorsal collar. They tend to be much more restricted to forests and secondary growth on hill slopes than are Swallows. Both House Martin *Delichon urbica* and Asian House Martin *D. dasypus* winter in Thailand, but the latter species is the more common and widespread; it may be distinguished by its sooty black underwing-coverts, which contrast with the paler, grey undersides to its flight feathers.

Pipits and wagtails

Three wintering pipits are all common and widespread. Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* of the race *richardi* occur in moist and dry open areas and are readily distinguishable from the resident races, *A. n. rufulus* and *A. n. malayensis*, by their larger size and familiar 'schreep' calls, in contrast to the short 'chirp' of the resident races. The Olive-backed Pipit *A. hodgsoni* is usually found in forests and open woodlands of the lowlands and hills, but is also occasionally found in moist areas of paddy stubble. The Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus* primarily frequents open coastal flats and dry, prairie-like areas of paddy stubble (plate 13). The relatively few records of both of these species in peninsular Thailand may merely reflect the poor coverage of that region. A fourth species, the Rosy Pipit *A. roseatus*, is a recently discovered visitor to the plains of the extreme north, and is generally found in moister areas than is the Red-throated, occurring particularly around the margins of pools (Round 1983). This species is a shorter-distance migrant which breeds along the Himalayas to western China.

The three commonest wagtails, Yellow *Motacilla flava*, Grey *M. cinerea* and Pied *M. alba*, are all well known to European observers, although the plumages of some races of Yellow and Pied are distinctively different from those occurring in Europe. While Yellow Wagtails occur in all manner of open lowland areas, including the landward edge of mangrove, the Grey mostly haunts streamsides in shady, wooded areas. The Pied Wagtail is markedly commoner in the north, and is found in open grassy areas of the lowlands and hills. The Citrine Wagtail *M. citreola* is common only in the marshy plains of the extreme north, although there are a few records from central Thailand. It feeds in wetter, more flooded paddies than does the Yellow Wagtail. While the usual call of Citrine appears to be almost indistinguishable from the equally harsh calls of the eastern races of Yellow Wagtail, it does have an additional, diagnostic note, best described as a metallic 'pzeeow', slightly higher-pitched and less rasping than the more frequently heard 'dzeep'.

The Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* is also fairly common, but, as its name suggests, it haunts mainly wooded areas, including parks and gardens of both lowlands and hills to at least 1,400m. In the peninsula, where it is most numerous, concentrations of several hundred may roost in mangroves, together with large numbers of Yellow Wagtails. Breeding as far north as Ussuriland and Sakhalin, it is a possible candidate for vagrancy to Europe and has been recorded as far west as Kutch in Northwest India (Ali & Ripley 1983).

Robins, chats and thrushes

Among the robins and chats are some highly skulking species whose status

has yet to be clarified. Most species frequent moist, shady areas. Three are known from only single Thai records. A Japanese Robin *Erithacus akahige* was trapped at 1,464m in hill evergreen forest in the southeast; a White-tailed Rubythroat *Luscinia pectoralis* was taken in the early 20th Century, near Bangkok; and a Black-throated Robin *L. obscura* was taken in lowland, scrubland habitat in the far north: so far, the only record outside its breeding range (Ripley & King 1966). This situation parallels that of the Rufous-headed Robin *L. ruficeps*, which breeds in the same area, and which, though unknown for Thailand, has been netted once in Malaysia (McClure 1963). The rarity of the last two species in their winter quarters may be due to their populations having been reduced as a result of forest destruction in their Chinese breeding ranges.

Both the Siberian Rubythroat *L. calliope* (plate 15) and the Bluethroat *L. svecica* are very common in open areas, but the Rubythroat is much more skulking and haunts dense scrub and grassland of both open plains and forest clearings up to at least 1,800m. The Bluethroat appears to be restricted to the marshy lowlands, and is frequently found on open, dry mud in fields of paddy stubble (plate 13). The Siberian Blue Robin *L. cyane* (plate 18) is, by contrast, an inhabitant of wooded situations and is found in a variety of habitats, from tropical rain forest to degraded deciduous woodland and bamboo. It is most common at low elevations, being found only rarely above 1,000m. This species has a habit of rapidly and constantly quivering its tail: a useful aid to identification. The Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* usually inhabits evergreen forest of the higher hills, and may sometimes be locally common on ridgetops and summits above 1,400m. Although most records are from the north and northwest, there have recently been a number of unconfirmed reports of the species from mountainous areas farther south, and the species may be more widespread than hitherto thought. The Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureoreus* is not uncommon in the northwest; it occurs primarily in deforested areas and open woodlands.

Among the races of the Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* which winter in Thailand is the race *philippensis* which breeds in northeastern Asia, the male of which has mostly chestnut-rufous underparts and can be confused with other species, such as the Sino-Himalayan Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush *M. rufiventris*. The White-throated Rock Thrush *M. gularis* is also a long-distance migrant, breeding in northeastern Asia and wintering in eastern, southeastern and peninsular Thailand, where it is rare or uncommon, frequenting forest canopy and forest edge. The Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* is one of the most conspicuous winter visitors to open areas up to approximately 1,600m, but is most common in well-watered lowlands. Those which winter in most of Thailand are of the race *stejnegeri*. The Pied Bushchat *S. caprata* is known only as a resident in Thailand, breeding in open areas, including cultivated land, up to 1,600m.

The predominant wintering thrush in Thailand is the Eye-browed *Turdus obscurus* (fig. 4), which occurs annually. Although occurring throughout the country, often appearing in lowland gardens and mangroves, the largest flocks are found in hill evergreen forests of the north and northwest, where

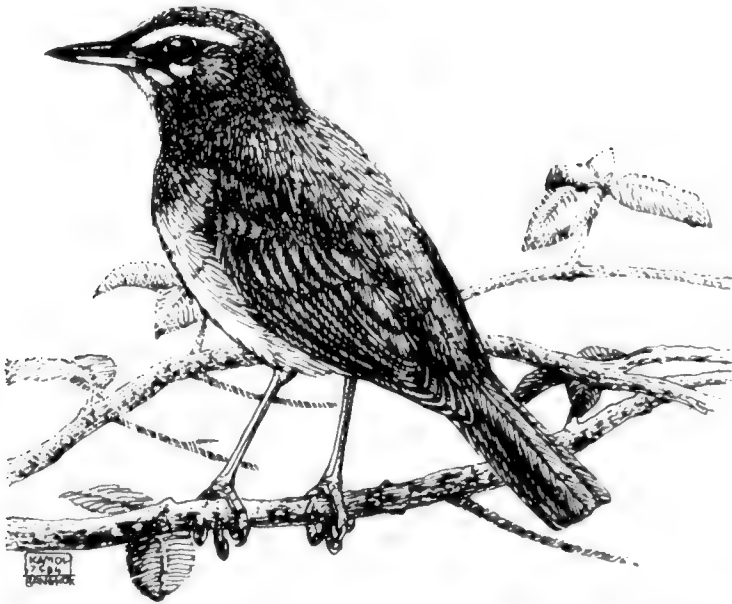


Fig. 4. Male Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* (Kamol Komolphalin)

they feed on the forest floor, in fruiting trees and in flowering trees (where they apparently take nectar). The Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* probably winters mostly to the south, in peninsular Thailand and in Malaysia, though small flocks occur annually with Eye-browed during March and April on the hills of the northwest. The White's Thrush *Z. dauma* has both breeding and wintering populations in Thailand. Again found mostly in hill forests of the northwest, it is usually encountered singly or in pairs and is less liable to associate with mixed thrush flocks.

Small numbers of Grey-sided Thrushes *T. feae* are found annually with Eye-broweds, but most other thrush species show more irregular and irruptive patterns of occurrence. While a few Dusky Thrushes *T. naumanni* *eunomus* have been recorded from the northwest in most winters since 1980, there was an exceptionally large influx in January 1982, with one flock of over 100 on the summit of Doi Inthanon alone, where they locally outnumbered Eye-browed Thrushes. In the same year, a few Red-throated Thrushes *T. ruficollis ruficollis* and Black-throated Thrushes *T. r. atrogularis* were also found. Other migrant thrushes, of mostly Sino-Himalayan origin, which occur in Thailand include Orange-headed Thrush *Z. citrina*, Long-tailed Thrush *Z. dixonii*, Black-breasted Thrush *T. dissimilis*, Grey-winged Blackbird *T. bouboul* and Chestnut Thrush *T. rubrocanus*. There are undoubtedly many other species from both the Sino-Himalayan and Eastern Palearctic regions which are likely candidates for future occurrence in Thailand.

Warblers

Both Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* and Lanceolated Warbler *L. lanceolata* are extremely common in open lowland areas throughout Thailand. Whereas Pallas's Grasshopper prefers the more swampy or reedy areas, Lanceolated occurs in a wider range of habitats, from swamps and paddyfield margins to dry grasslands up to at least 1,800m. Both species are fairly vocal in their winter quarters, and have a

variety of hard metallic and *Acrocephalus*-like chacking notes, as well as a slurred, trilling subsong, which facilitates their detection. Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler is generally the more easily observed, being more readily flushed, and less inclined to dart immediately into dense cover. It often emerges to sit in the tops of rushes or low bushes in the early morning.

The commonest small *Acrocephalus* is the Black-browed Reed Warbler *A. bistrigiceps* (fig. 5), which frequents marshy, lowland areas. Blunt-winged Warbler *A. concinens* is much less common and winters in dry grassland on hill slopes as well as in lowland marshes. This species is best distinguished from the much rarer Paddyfield Warbler *A. agricola* by its generally warm olive upperparts, without a strong rufescent tinge, and by its longer, heavier bill. Paddyfield Warblers are greyer above and whiter below when worn (i.e. for most of the winter) or brighter, more strongly rufescent above and tawny-coloured beneath when in fresh plumage (Williamson 1976). Both species possess a well-defined, whitish supercilium, but this is more pronounced on Paddyfield. Paddyfield Warbler may be restricted to lowland, marshy areas, and there are only very few records, from the extreme north and from around Bangkok.

The Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus* is very common, frequenting a variety of lowland marshy habitats, including the landward edge of mangrove. Clamorous Reed Warbler *A. stentoreus* is little known in Thailand: it has been found in the plains of the north, but there are no satisfactorily documented recent records. As the eastern race of Great Reed, *A. a. orientalis*, almost always shows fine, greyish streaking on the upper breast, Clamorous Reed should be separable, with care. The Thick-billed Warbler *A. aedon* is common in winter, especially in the north. Though frequenting marshes, it is also common in drier scrub and grassland of the hills.

No fewer than 17 species of *Phylloscopus* warbler are found in Thailand, of which only two (the White-tailed Leaf Warbler *P. davisoni* and the Ashy-throated Warbler *P. maculipennis*) breed. A further seven species, however, are relatively short-distance migrants from the Sino-Himalayan region. Of the remainder, both Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi* and Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* are common, but the former frequents forest edge, open woodlands and secondary growth, from the foothills up to high elevations, while the Dusky Warbler is predominantly a lowland bird, occurring in scrub and low trees, usually close to water and in mangrove.

The Pale-legged Leaf Warbler *P. tenellipes* is also a bird of lower storey vegetation and mostly frequents forest edge, especially along streams, and mangrove. Like Eastern Crowned Leaf Warbler *P. coronatus*, it is a long-distance migrant, breeding in northeastern Asia, and its possible potential for westward vagrancy has already been mentioned (*Brit. Birds* 74: 100).

The Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus* is by far the most common and widespread of the arboreal leaf-warblers, occurring in a broad spectrum of wooded areas and in scrub, gardens and cultivated areas up to the highest elevations. The Two-barred Greenish Warbler *P. plumbeitarsus* is fairly common, occurring mostly in forest edge, gardens, open woodlands and bamboo of low to moderate elevations. It is the only 'Greenish Warbler'



Fig. 5. Black-browed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps* (Killian Mullarney)

known in most of Thailand: Greenish Warblers *P. trochiloides* (of the races *trochiloides* and *obscuratus*) are known with certainty only from the hills of the northwest. Nonetheless, a visitor who has seen well-marked Two-barred Greenish on its breeding grounds or on spring passage in Mongolia (e.g. Kitson 1979) may be puzzled by the apparent indistinctness of the wingbars of most of the Two-barred Greenish Warblers wintering in Thailand. This is probably because most are in worn plumage and do not undergo their complete moult until the late winter (Williamson 1976).

In northern and central Thailand, including the Bangkok area, the Arctic Warbler *P. borealis* and Eastern Crowned Leaf Warbler occur mostly on spring and autumn passage, and winter mainly to the south. Eastern Crowned Leaf Warbler is the commonest leaf-warbler of lowland primary forest in peninsular Thailand. The Arctic Warbler appears more often to frequent forest edge, mangroves and open wooded areas, although both species occur in these habitats on passage. As suggested by Wallace (1980), the Eastern Crowned Leaf Warbler is a potential candidate for westward vagrancy, and there is an old record for Heligoland (Gätke 1895). In Thailand the common race of the Pallas's Warbler *P. proregulus* is *chloronotus*, but *P. p. proregulus* has now also been recorded from the hill evergreen forests of Chiang Mai Province (Round 1983).

The more arboreal *Phylloscopus* warblers are frequent components of mixed species flocks in forest, where they often associate with various babblers, flycatchers and a variety of other small birds, both resident and migrant. Species such as the Yellow-browed Warbler, which occur in a variety of habitats, will often associate with flocks in forest, but feed singly in more open situations.

Some other warblers which are long-distance migrants and which winter in Thailand include Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* (two records only: Round 1982), Stub-tailed Bush Warbler *Cettia squameiceps* and Manchurian Bush Warbler *C. canturiens*.

Flycatchers

Both Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa latirostris* (fig. 6) and Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* are common at low and moderate elevations, but the Brown Flycatcher is the more arboreal of the two and restricted to open woodlands, wooded gardens, forest edge and mangrove, while the Red-breasted occurs also in more open areas and scrub. The Dark-sided Flycatcher *M. sibirica* (fig. 6) is more closely associated with forest edge than is either of these two. It is commonest in the peninsular part of the country, but a few are found also in the north and in the east. Though there have been a few reports of Brown Flycatcher in Europe, the identification of all is perhaps suspect (Nisbet & Nuefeldt 1975), while a record of Dark-sided Flycatcher from Bermuda is almost certainly due to extreme eastwards vagrancy (overshooting) in spring and subsequent dispersal southwards (Wingate 1983). Two very strikingly marked species, the Mugimaki Flycatcher *F. mugimaki* and the Yellow-rumped Flycatcher, both breed in northeastern Asia and frequent the crowns of trees in evergreen forest on their wintering grounds in Thailand. The Mugimaki is scarce in winter at Khao Yai, whereas the Yellow-rumped winters mainly to the south and occurs mostly as a spring and autumn passage migrant, when it may also be found in gardens, mangroves and more open areas.

Shrikes

The Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* is one of the commonest and most characteristic winter visitors to predominantly open lowlands throughout Thailand, and is found at fairly high density in paddyfields, dry croplands, gardens and open scrub. The Tiger Shrike *L. tigrinus*, however, winters in southern Thailand and inhabits clearings and forest edge. It is found on passage in all manner of wooded habitats, including gardens and mangroves. Resident races of the Long-tailed Shrike *L. schach* are very common in open areas of scrub and cultivation in both lowlands and hilly areas.

Starlings

There were three records of the Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* in the north during winter 1983/84, the first records for Thailand (G. Speight, J. M. Turton, T. Lawrence *et al. in litt.*). The Purple-backed Starling *S. sturninus*, which breeds in northeastern Asia, is an uncommon winter visitor, probably wintering mostly in the south of Thailand, though occasional large concentrations, probably of passage birds, have been recorded from the southeast (Ogle 1974). Though mostly wintering in Southeast Asia through to the Greater Sundas, one individual has been recorded as far west as Pakistan (Ali & Ripley 1983).

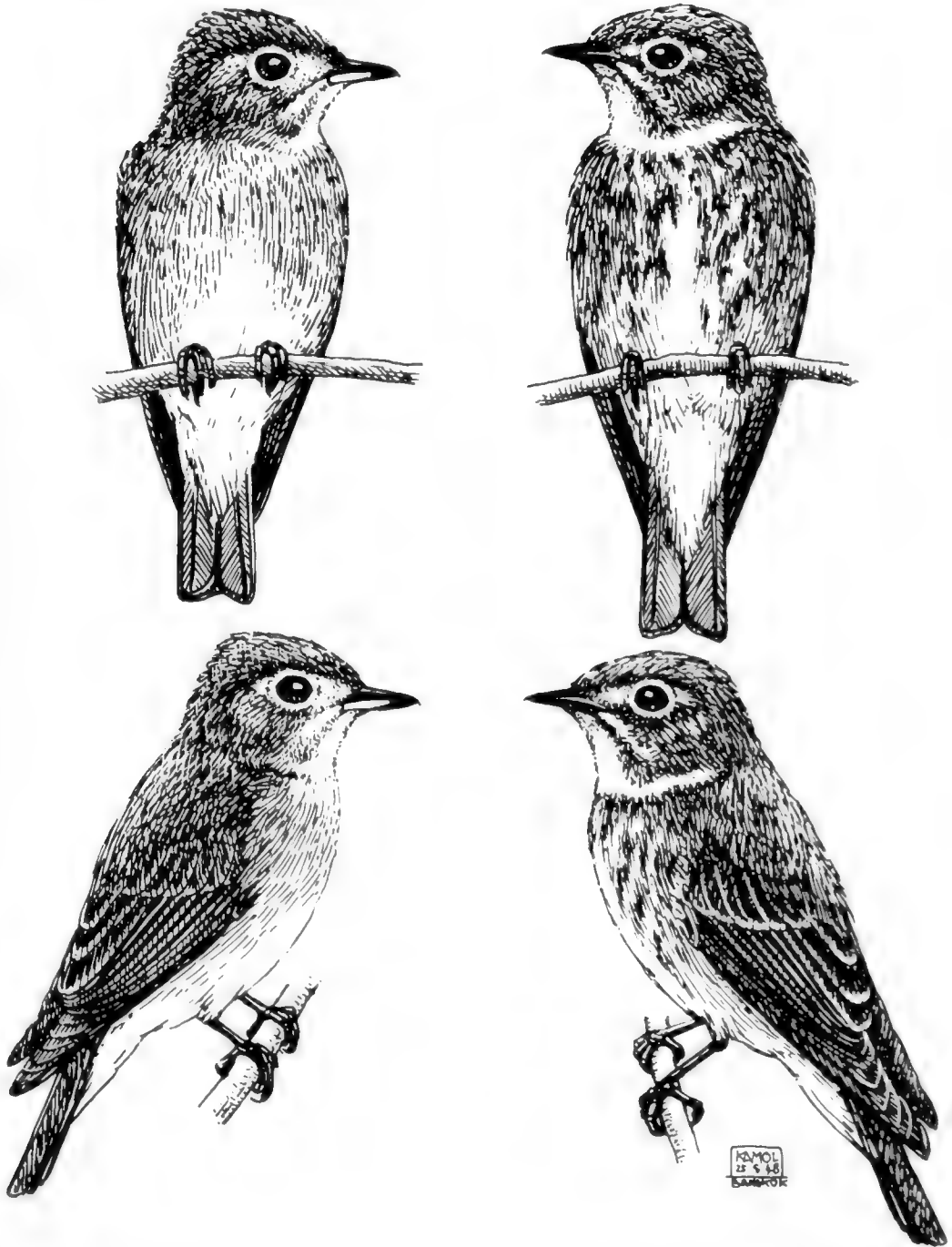


Fig. 6. Left two birds, Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa latirostris latirostris*; right two birds, Dark-sided Flycatcher *M. sibirica*. Note heavier, pale-based bill of Brown; longer wings of Dark-sided, which has darker, more obviously streaked flanks and sides to breast, contrasting with white stripe down centre of breast; Dark-sided also usually, but not always, shows partial white collar (Kamol Komolphalin)

Buntings

The commonest bunting is the Yellow-breasted *Emberiza aureola*, which occurs throughout the entire country, predominantly in lowland areas (especially ricefields). It can nevertheless be difficult to find away from the more extensive marshy areas, where reedbeds provide secure roosts and where concentrations of several thousand may occur. The Chestnut Bunting *E. rutila* and the Little Bunting *E. pusilla* are somewhat less common and usually found singly or in small groups. Both species frequent open scrubby hillsides, although the Little Bunting also frequents

paddyfields in the extreme north. The Black-faced Bunting *E. spodocephala* is rather local and scarce and most records here come from scrub growth and riverine sandbars in the far north. This species has been recorded once on Heligoland (Weigold 1911). The Chestnut-eared Bunting *E. fucata* is fairly common only in the extreme north, frequenting paddyfields and marshy areas. Tristram's Bunting *E. tristrami* is rare: and there are only two records, of four individuals, from open hill slopes at 1,600-1,700m (King 1966; P. A. Coe & G. Walbridge *in litt.*).

Other landbird migrants

Migrant species which breed in Northeast Asia and which occur in Thailand (but which are not considered in this paper) include Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Oriental Cuckoo *C. saturatus*, Lesser Cuckoo *C. poliocephalus*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Ashy Minivet *Pericrocotus divaricatus*, Japanese White-eye *Zosterops japonica* and Chestnut-flanked White-eye *Z. erythropleura*.

Birdwatching sites

The following list includes a representative selection of birdwatching sites in a variety of different habitats and geographical areas. The majority of localities have been chosen also for their accessibility: they will give good results to birdwatchers provided with a hire car who have perhaps only three to four weeks to spend in the country. Thailand, however, does have an efficient public transport system, so that, for those visitors who are less constrained by time, most sites are accessible by bus. Sites which are nature reserves are identified as such (either National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary or Non-Hunting Area); they are administered by the Royal Forest Department. All are provided with guest accommodation and although, in theory, anyone planning to stay overnight should first obtain a permit in Bangkok, in practice, visitors are almost never turned away, so that this is not really necessary, particularly at the more frequented sites, such as Khao Yai and Doi Inthanon. While forest trails exist at all reserves, in many parks and sanctuaries these are not well signposted. Forestry personnel are, however, often available to act as guides in cases of difficulty. Very few areas have information leaflets or interpretive centres, but the *Shell Guide to the National Parks of Thailand* by R. J. Dobias (1982) gives good background information and small-scale trail maps for many sites. The location of each site is shown in fig. 1.

1. *Chiang Saen and the Golden Triangle, Chiang Rai Province.* Plains. Low, deforested foothills extending to shores of Mekong River where borders of Laos, Burma and Thailand meet, about 10km north of Chiang Saen. Relict trees and scrub in moist valley bottoms support good variety of migrant passerines, including Siberian Rubythroat, Siberian Blue Robin, Spotted Bush Warbler *Bradypterus thoracicus* and Manchurian Bush Warbler. Sandbars of Mekong and large freshwater marsh to southwest of the town hold many waterbirds; recent records of Black Stork, over 40 Spot-billed Ducks *Anas poecilorhyncha*, Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus* and Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*. Area probably at its best in late dry season (late January onwards), when many riverine sandbars exposed. Black-faced Buntings occur in riverine scrub.



13. Dry paddy stubble in Fang Basin, northern Thailand, January 1981. Haunt of wintering Grey-headed Lapwings *Hoplopterus cinereus*, Bluethroats *Luscinia svecica*, Red-throated Pipits *Anthus cervinus* and buntings *Emberiza* (P. D. Round)

2. *Tha Ton and the Fang Basin, Chiang Mai Province.* Plains. Degraded marshland and rice-paddy, between confluence of Kok and Fang Rivers. At its best when areas of newly flooded, unplanted rice-paddy exist in close proximity to dry stubble (late December to late February), when many waders, including Temminck's Stints and Grey-headed Lapwings, Bluethroats, reed and bush warblers, Red-throated and Rosy Pipits, and many Citrine Wagtails may be found, together with four species of bunting. Situated on east side of Highway 107, 170km north of Chiang Mai and 2km south of Tha Ton. (Plates 8 & 13)

3. *Doi Pha Hom Pok, Chiang Mai Province.* Thailand's second highest mountain, maximum elevation 2,285m. Forest cover greatly reduced by hilltribes, but good, more-or-less-continuous hill evergreen exists above 1,700m. Outstanding locality for both wintering and resident chats, warblers and thrushes, including several Sino-Himalayan species which are either scarce or absent elsewhere in Thailand. Visits must be arranged in advance with Chiang Mai office of Watershed Development Division, Royal Forest Department. Access by rough dirt road (impassable to saloon cars) branching west off Highway 107, 9km north of Fang (about 160km north of Chiang Mai). (Plates 6 & 9)

4. *Doi Ang Khang, Chiang Mai Province.* Maximum elevation about 1,800m. Almost completely deforested, remaining cover being mostly limited to steep, rocky ridges, but nevertheless an exciting birding locality. Open terrain is much favoured by raptors: a few records of Goshawk, while Hen Harriers are annual. Of wintering passerines, Daurian Redstarts, Buff-throated Warblers *Phylloscopus subaffinis* and Little Buntings are fairly common, while resident specialities include Giant Nuthatch *Sitta magna* in relict stand of pines, White-browed Laughingthrush *Garrulax sannio* and Spot-breasted Parrotbill *Paradoxornis guttaticollis* in scrub and grassland. Access via steep (but good) dirt road branching west off Highway 107, 137km north of Chiang Mai. Rustic overnight accommodation and food exist in a small village situated near a government agricultural station. (Plate 14)

5. *Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, Chiang Mai Province.* Maximum elevation 1,685m. The best-known and most-accessible birding locality in Northern Thailand, where 326 species have been recorded (Round 1984). Lower slopes covered with dry dipterocarp woodland, while upper slopes support mosaic of hill evergreen forest and open areas. Higher elevations hold

White's and Eye-browed Thrushes, a few Red-flanked Bluetails, Daurian Redstart and several leaf-warblers. Access is by tarmac road extending 19 km from Chiang Mai to Phuphing Palace at 1,400 m elevation; dirt road leads on to highest summit (Doi Pui). Easily accessible by public transport from Chiang Mai.

6. *Doi Inthanon National Park, Chiang Mai Province*. Thailand's highest mountain, maximum elevation 2,590 m. Undoubtedly the foremost birding locality in Northern Thailand; 343 species recorded so far (Round 1984). Dry dipterocarp forests on lower slopes give way to stands of pines and to open, deforested areas which support wintering Grey Bushchats *Saxicola ferrea*, Siberian Rubythroats, Buff-throated, Radde's and Yellow-streaked Warblers *Phylloscopus armandii* and a few Little and Chestnut Buntings. Buzzards and occasional Grey-faced Buzzard may also be found. Hill evergreen forest above 1,500 m grades into lower-stature, almost montane-type forest around summit, where small marsh surrounded by rhododendrons proves very attractive to winter visitors. There are usually five or six Red-flanked Bluetails in vicinity and, in good years, large, mixed thrush flocks. Predominant leaf-warblers are the two resident species, White-tailed and Ashy-throated, together with wintering Orange-barred *Phylloscopus pulcher*. Flocks of Scarlet Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus* are often present and frequently contain occasional surprise visitor, such as Dark-breasted Rosefinch *C. nipafiensis*. Metalled access road branches west off Highway 108, 58 km southwest of Chiang Mai and 1 km before Chom Thong, and extends 46 km to summit of mountain.

7. *Nam Nao National Park, Phetchabun Province*. Maximum elevation 1,271 m. One of chain of parks and sanctuaries extending along mountain range on western rim of Korat Plateau (of which Khao Yai is southernmost). Holds range of habitats, from dry dipterocarp to bamboo dry evergreen forest, pines and hill evergreen forest. Although it has many birds in common with Khao Yai, it supports more Sino-Himalayan species. Evergreen forest occurs at a lower elevation than on either Doi Suthep or Doi Inthanon, and is therefore an especially good site for Siberian Blue Robin and other species which winter in foothills. Situated on Highway 12, 50 km east of Lomsak. Dirt road leads to the headquarters, 2 km to north.

8. *Ban Lung Dua, Phitsanulok Province*. Plains. Small marshy area, maintained as sanctuary for wintering ducks by local rice farmer. Up to 10,000 Lesser Treeducks, over 1,000 Garganeys, a few hundred Pintails and, occasionally, small numbers of Wigeons, Baer's Pochards and Ferruginous Ducks. Many scattered trees, shrub growth and reeds, so area supports good

14. Open deforested area at about 1,600 m, Doi Ang Khang, Thailand, July 1983 (P. D. Round)





15. Male Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*, Beung Boraphet, Thailand, March 1981 (P. D. Round)

variety of resident and migrant birds, including Marsh Harriers, Siberian Rubythroats (plate 15), Lanceolated, Black-browed Reed and Dusky Warblers. Situated in Bang Rakham District, about 15 km west of Phitsanulok.

9. *Lam Khan Chu, Chaiyaphum Province*. Plains. Freshwater marsh of over 20 km², surrounded by rice-paddies. One of few remaining semi-natural wetlands in northeastern Thailand, supporting concentrations of over 1,000 Lesser Treeducks and smaller numbers of Garganeys. Marsh Harriers and Small Pratincoles have been recorded, and area, though little-explored, is certain to hold wide range of winter visitors. Situated on Highway 201, 10 km north of Chaturat and on route between Nam Nao and Khao Yai National Parks.

10. *Beung Boraphet Non-Hunting Area, Nakhon Sawan Province*. Plains. Freshwater lake, over 200 km² in area, near confluence of Nan, Yom and Ping Rivers, formed by damming of swamp. Known primarily as site where White-eyed River Martin *Pseudochelidon sirintarae* was discovered in 1968, when nine individuals were netted (Thonglongya 1968). There are still only two sight records of this species, whose breeding area is unknown (King & Kanwanich 1978; D. Ogle *in litt.*). Large numbers of Swallows, Yellow Wagtails and Yellow-breasted Buntings roost in reedbeds around lakeside, while at least 30,000 ducks (mainly Lesser Treeducks and Garganeys, with a few hundred Pintails, over 100 Baer's Pochards and small numbers of other species) roost on lake. Many Marsh Harriers, a few Pied Harriers and Spotted Eagles overwinter. Marshes and dry paddies support variety of wintering chats, warblers and pipits. Access via Non-Hunting Area headquarters, some 20 km east of Nakhon Sawan. Boats on lake may be hired. (Plate 16)



16. Rank grass and reeds around margins of rice cultivation, Beung Boraphet, Thailand, February 1981. Haunt of *Locustella* and *Acrocephalus* warblers and Baillon's Crakes *Porzana pusilla* (P. D. Round)

11. *Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary, Uthai Thani Province*. Maximum elevation 1,554m. Some of the least disturbed lowland deciduous forest in Thailand, existing in mosaic with dry evergreen and hill evergreen formations. Contains more-or-less-intact lowland bird fauna. Accessible areas of dry dipterocarp and mixed deciduous woodland around sanctuary headquarters hold variety of winter visitors or passage migrants, including Siberian Blue Robin, Radde's and Two-barred Greenish Warblers, Forest Wagtail and Tiger Shrike. Access via dirt road, near village of Lan Sak, some 70km west of Uthai Thani. (Plate 5)

12. *Khao Yai National Park, Nakhon Ratchasima Province*. Maximum elevation 1,328m. Thailand's first and best-known national park. Accessible area around headquarters supports lush, tall-stature, dry evergreen forest alternating with grassy clearings. Radde's, Two-barred Greenish and Pale-legged Leaf Warblers are fairly common around forest edge, while Sulphur-breasted Warblers *Phylloscopus ricketti* and Blyth's Crowned Leaf Warblers *P. reguloides* are found in mixed-species flocks in forest interior. Grasslands support Siberian Rubythroats, Thick-billed and Blunt-winged Warblers. Many resident species, including four species of hornbills. Good accommodation and restaurant facilities. Tarmac access road branches south off Highway 2, 1 km before Pat Chong. (Plates 2-4)

13. *Chiangrak and Rangsit Marshes, Phatum Thani Province*. Plains. Freshwater marshy areas on northern outskirts of Bangkok, with abundant growth of low rushes, some scrub and trees and small ponds. Good site for seeing both resident and migrant *Ixobrychus* bitterns, crakes, including Baillon's Crake, Snipe and Pintail Snipe, Pallas's Grasshopper, Lanceolated, Black-browed Reed and Blunt-winged Warblers. Up to a few hundred Garganeys and small variety of waders, including Long-toed Stints, often present. Access via side roads on both east and west of Highway 1, near Rangsit, a few km north of Bangkok Airport.

14. *Khao Soi Dao Wildlife Sanctuary, Chanthaburi Province*. Maximum elevation 1,660m. Moist, semi-evergreen and hill evergreen forest. Lowland areas around headquarters are easily accessible and support many Siberian Blue Robins and occasional White-throated Rock Thrush. Amur Falcon and Needle-tailed Swift both recorded in spring. Sanctuary headquarters is 2km down dirt road which branches west off Highway 317, 62.5km north of Chanthaburi.

15. *Khao Khieo Wildlife Sanctuary and Bang Phra Non-Hunting Area, Chonburi Province.* Maximum elevation 798m. Khao Khieo is a steep mountain, covered with secondary growth and semi-evergreen forest, while Bang Phra is a freshwater reservoir, surrounded by small areas of rushes, long grass and dry scrub. Open areas around lake-shore support wintering *Acrocephalus* warblers and Siberian Rubythroats, while the more wooded areas around foot of mountain support many arboreal migrants, such as Arctic Warblers and Yellow-rumped Flycatchers, during spring and autumn passage. Few birds on the open water, other than Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, and some Cotton Pygmy Geese *Nettapus coromandelianus*. One or two Ospreys usually fish here. Area greatly underwatched, in spite of relative proximity to Bangkok, and has a lot of potential. Tarmac road branches east off Highway 3 between Bangsaen and Sriracha and winds around lake-shore, to foot of Khao Khieo.

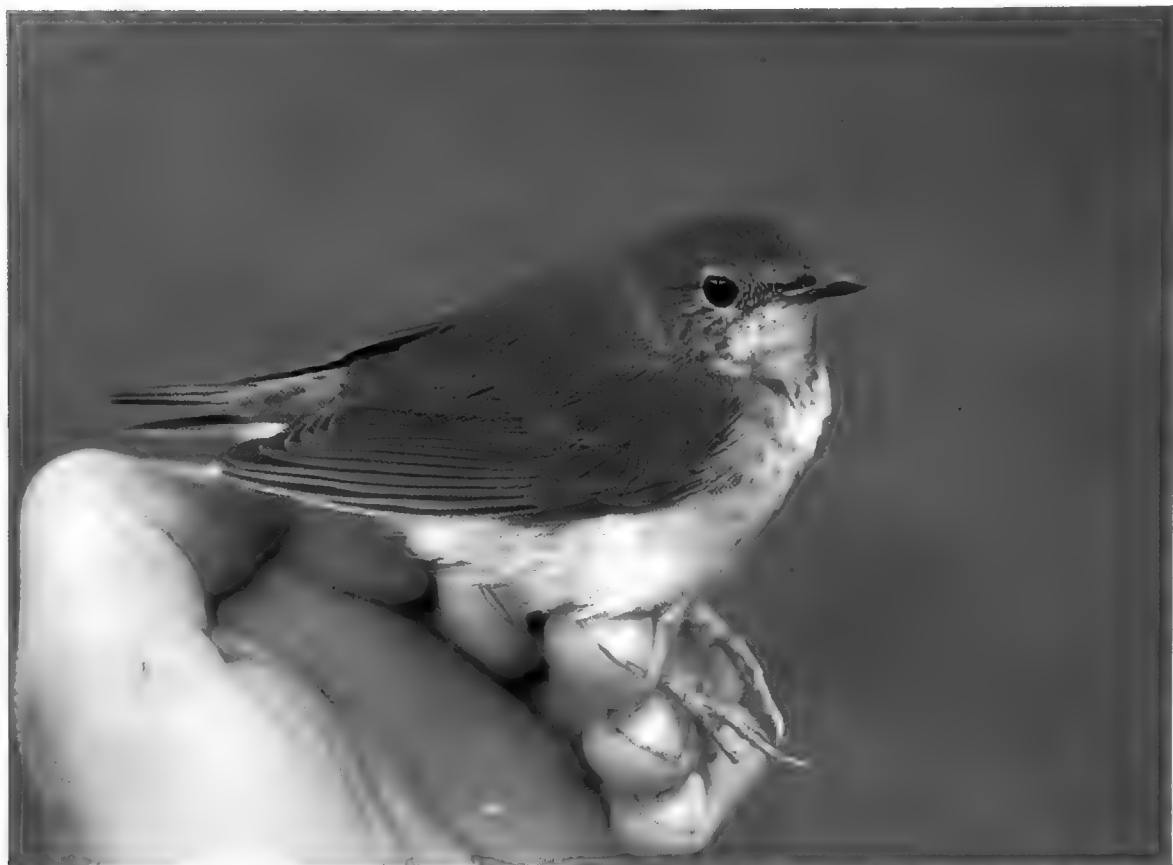
16. *Bangpoo, Samut Prakan Province.* Coastal. Areas of coastal mudflats, fishponds, mangrove and freshwater marsh in close proximity. Becoming somewhat built-up, but still very good for birds. Similar, though usually more restricted variety of waders to those at Samut Sakhon (17). Best on rising or falling tide, when small areas of mudflats exposed, or when fishponds only partly flooded. Large numbers of Whiskered and Common Terns, a few White-winged Black Terns and occasionally Gull-billed, Caspian and Crested Terns, together with over 1,000 gulls (mostly Brown-headed, with a few Black-headed, but Slender-billed, Black-tailed and Herring Gulls have all been recorded). Freshwater areas support similar array of species to those at Rangsit (13), while mangroves are good for wintering or passage leaf-warblers and flycatchers. Situated at Km 37, on Highway 3, east of Bangkok. Good views over coast and mudflats from long pier (which ends in fish restaurant).

17. *Samut Sakhon Area, Samut Sakhon and Samut Songkhram Provinces.* Coastal. Huge area of fishponds and salt pans, extending 30-60 km west of Bangkok between mouths of Tachin and Mae Klong Rivers. Supports larger numbers and better variety of waders than Bangpoo, including three stints, many Broad-billed and Marsh Sandpipers and a few Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus*. Spectacular concentration of 400 Asian Dowitchers found in April 1984. Good numbers of egrets, terns and gulls. Access by viewing from Highway 35. Dirt road extends 2 km to upper shore at Km 50. (Plates 10 & 17)

18. *Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park, Prachuap Khiri Khan Province.* Coastal. Good juxtaposition of habitats, with open sandy shore, small mudflats, dry coastal flats, freshwater marsh and rocky, wooded hills. Supports unparalleled variety of waders in modest numbers. Both Great Knot and Nordmann's Greenshank recorded annually, while Caspian and Crested Terns present throughout winter. Three recent 'firsts' for Thailand: Long-billed Dowitcher, Spoon-billed

17. Intertidal mudflats at Samut Sakhon, near Bangkok, Thailand (P. D. Round)





18. Female or first-winter Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane*, Bangpoo, Thailand, September 1981
(P. D. Round)

Sandpiper and Great Black-headed Gull. Freshwater marshes support many crakes, both Marsh and Pied Harriers, and one or two Spotted Eagles, many Bluethroats, warblers, and other small migrants. Open deciduous woodland around park headquarters supports wintering and passage Arctic Warblers, Brown Flycatchers, and Forest Wagtails. Foothills about 20km west of park are good for southward raptor migration in autumn. Access by turning east off Highway 4 at Km 287; dirt road skirts marsh and leads to headquarters.

19. *Khlong Nakha Wildlife Sanctuary, Ranong Province*. Maximum elevation 1,170m. This and succeeding sites are situated in Malaysian faunal subregion, with distinctly different resident bird fauna. Good, lowland, valley-bottom evergreen forest and adjacent garden habitat. Eastern Crowned Leaf Warbler and Forest Wagtail are commonest Palearctic migrants, though Siberian Blue Robin (plate 18), Brown and Dark-sided Flycatchers may all be found. Headquarters situated 0.5km along dirt road which branches east off Highway 4 at Km 687, about 70km south of Ranong.

20. *Khao Banthat (Khao Chong) Wildlife Sanctuary, Trang Province*. Maximum elevation 1,370m. Similar—but more extensive—streamside, lowland, valley-bottom forest to that at Khlong Nakha, with better trails. Similar array of migrant species. Of particular interest for Chestnut-capped Thrush *Zoothera interpres* (rare and little-known Malaysian species). Situated on Highway 4, about 20km east of Trang.

21. *Ko Libong Non-Hunting Area, Trang Province*. A small (8km × 9km) island, known chiefly as wader site. Nordmann's Greenshank (flocks of up to ten), Great Knot (up to 26) and Crab Plover (maximum 12) recorded annually on offshore mudflats and sandbars, as well as flocks of Crested and Lesser Crested Terns. Accessible areas of island dominated by mangroves and secondary growth, holding a few migrants, such as Yellow-rumped and Mugimaki Flycatchers. Large roost of Yellow Wagtails and Forest Wagtails. Situated 3.5km offshore; access via boat from Kantang, about 30km southwest of Trang.

Future prospects

Until the mid 1970s, ornithology in Thailand was largely the province of the professional scientist. Since that time, visiting amateur birdwatchers have added immensely to the knowledge of bird status and distribution. In some cases, they have contributed the only existing bird lists for nature reserves; they have identified hitherto unknown sites of conservation importance; and they have engendered interest and knowledge among Thai birdwatchers and scientists. Notwithstanding, coverage in Thailand has been very uneven, and much of the northeast, for example, is very little known. That area attracts fewer birdwatchers because it is largely deforested and has a much less diverse resident bird fauna, but there is no doubt that it must continue to support a great many migrant open-country species. Many nature reserves throughout the country are still ornithologically unexplored, so that the visiting birdwatcher can make original and exciting discoveries. Shorebirds, in particular, are certain to receive much more attention in the near future owing to the likely international importance of intertidal habitats in Thailand; indeed, 'Interwader', an international co-operative research project, expects to be operating in Thailand in 1985, as it was in 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 126-128).

Tourism is of steadily increasing importance in Thailand as a source of foreign income, and increasing numbers of foreign visitors are becoming aware of the country's wildlife interest. Birds, through their relative conspicuousness and great species diversity, exert a powerful attraction for visitors to national parks. While 'wildlife tourism' may never contribute more than a small proportion of the total volume of tourists, there is little doubt that it can provide incentives for conservation through contributing to the local economy of the rural people who live around park margins.

To summarise, ornithology in Thailand is entering a new and dynamic phase, due to the activities of both visiting and resident birdwatchers. While Thailand, like most of the tropical world, is facing conservation problems of unprecedented gravity, it is to be hoped that the study of birds, through increasing environmental awareness, will further enhance current conservation efforts.

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank all those visiting birdwatchers who, through their efforts in the field, assiduous note-taking and submission of records, have greatly added to our knowledge of Thai birds. Please keep coming! Some observers will recognise that their records have been referred to briefly in this article. They should rest assured that, where appropriate, all such will be published elsewhere with full acknowledgment to the observers concerned. We thank the staff of the Royal Thai Forest Department (National Parks Division and Wildlife Conservation Division) for their assistance and unstinting hospitality at the many nature reserves frequented by birdwatchers. Peter Alexander-Marrack and Steve Gast commented on sections of this manuscript. Tim Inskipp drew attention to some useful references.

Finally, we thank the editor, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, who originally conceived the idea of this paper and who provided much encouragement during its preparation.

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Appendix I. Organisations and journals concerned with ornithology in Thailand

1. *The Association for the Conservation of Wildlife* is conducting ornithological research and has established a database on bird distribution, seasonality, and conservation status and so on. The ACW provides information and advice on request to visiting birdwatchers, and is currently working on a new *Field Guide to the Birds of Thailand*. Details of sight records should be sent to P. D. Round, ACW, 4 Old Custom House Lane, Bangkok 10500.
2. The *Bangkok Bird Club* has one indoor meeting and one field meeting per month and also publishes a newsletter which appears at monthly intervals. Contact M. R. Parcharjakorn Voravan, 656 Friendship Village, Sukhumvit 77, Bangkok 10260.
3. *The Siam Society (Natural History Section)* organises field outings (mostly botanical) and lectures and publishes a good, scientific journal *The Natural History Bulletin of the Siam Society*, which appears bi-annually and contains many papers on birds, including updates on status and distribution. Contributors or would-be subscribers should write to the co-editor: Dr W. Y. Brockelman, Department of Biology, Faculty of Science, Mahidol University, Rama 6 Road, Bangkok 10400.
4. The *National Parks Division* and the *Wildlife Conservation Division* of the *Royal Thai Forest Department* are the organisations concerned with the administration of nature reserves and wildlife protection legislation. Address: Royal Thai Forest Department, Phahol Yothin Road, Bangkok, Bangkok 10900.

Appendix II. Bibliography

The following books are especially useful for ornithologists visiting Thailand.

DOBIAS, R. J. 1982. *The Shell Guide to the National Parks of Thailand*. Bangkok. Presents access details, maps, habitat descriptions and lists some wildlife occurring in 27 national parks or other categories of nature reserve. Available from The Shell Company of Thailand Ltd, PO Box 345, Bangkok.

KING, B., DICKINSON, E. C., & WOODCOCK, M. W. 1975. *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia*. London. The most detailed and accurate guide currently available, but not particularly well-suited for rapid use in the field.

LEKAGUL, B., & CRONIN, E. W. 1974. *Bird Guide of Thailand*. 2nd edn. Bangkok. Ready field reference, with fairly good habitat and distributional information, though many inaccuracies in the plates.

MEDWAY, LORD, & WELLS, D. R. 1976. *The Birds of the Malay Peninsula*. vol. 5. London. Detailed habitat and distributional information on birds occurring in peninsular Thailand and Malaysia. Useful introductory chapters contain much information on the biology of resident and migrant species.

SMYTHIES, B. E. 1983. *The Birds of Burma*. 3rd edn. Hindhead. Good, detailed information on habitat, behaviour and voice of resident and migrant species.

SONOBE, K., & ROBINSON, J. W. (eds.) 1982. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan*. Tokyo. Good illustrations of many Palearctic species which winter in Thailand.

Dr Boonsong Lekagul, Philip D. Round and Kamol Komolphalin, Association for the Conservation of Wildlife, 4 Old Custom House Lane, Bangkok 10500, Thailand

Mystery photographs

97 In last month's photograph (repeated here as plate 19), an unusual duck (left-hand bird) is seen consorting with a pack of Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula*. Its outline clearly confirms that it is a diving duck, probably of the genus *Aythya*. Its distinctive grey mantle suggests an adult male Scaup *A. marila*, or even Lesser Scaup *A. affinis*. On the other hand, first impressions can be wrong.

What are the diagnostic characters of Scaup? In the male, the plumage is black-and-white, with a grey back, the head-shape is rounded, and the head sheen is greenish; the bill is grey, dark-tipped on the nail only. The male Lesser Scaup is similar in general appearance, but its head is higher domed and the sheen bluish; the bill is likewise tipped dark on the nail alone.

Clearly, the bird in the photograph is not a scaup. It has a broad dark bill-tip and its head-shape is peaked and kinked, perhaps reminiscent of Ring-necked Duck *A. collaris*. So, what can it be? In the photograph, there are few clues apart from head-shape and bill-tip. In the field, head sheen, iris colour and vermiculation pattern might provide further evidence. Another hint might be the company it keeps, for the mystery bird is in fact a male hybrid from a male Tufted Duck \times female Pochard *A. ferina*. (Note that female Tufted \times male Pochard produces a bird much more like a typical female Tufted Duck: see Gillham *et al.* 1966.) The birds in plate 19 were photographed in the Netherlands by Arnoud B. van den Berg in November 1982.

This hybrid occurs not infrequently on inland waters in England, particularly in the southeast. Superficially resembling Scaup and Lesser Scaup, the male hybrid is a trap for beginners and experts alike. In the late 1950s, a bird at Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire, was diligently claimed as a Lesser Scaup until shot in March 1960 and finally identified as a male hybrid Tufted Duck \times Pochard.

The male hybrid plumage derives from both species. Undoubtedly the black-and-white feathering comes from Tufted Duck, but the head sheen tends to be purplish-brown rather than mauve (Sage 1961, 1963), although it can be greenish as on Scaup (Gillham *et al.* 1966). The Pochard-like head-shape has a curious kink, possibly a vestigial tuft. The broad bill-tip,

19. Hybrid Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* \times Pochard *A. ferina*, Netherlands, November 1982
(Arnoud B. van den Berg)



on the other hand, is clearly a Pochard character, and so is the grey mantle which is much more finely vermiculated than on either of the scaups. Not all 'Scaup-type' hybrids, however, are identical to the bird shown; there is a fair amount of variation in tone on the back, for example. **KEN OSBORNE**

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20. Mystery photograph 98. Identify the species. Answer next month



PhotoSpot

9. Dunn's Lark

Eric Hosking's photograph at the nest is perhaps the best known picture of this relatively little-known species of deserts and sub-deserts. The key features of Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni* are its massive, almost conical bill, its distinctly streaked upperparts, and its tail which, in flight, shows broad black outer margins. This species also shows a much shorter primary projection than do the desert larks *Ammomanes*.



21. Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni*, Jordan, May 1965 (Eric Hosking)

Dunn's Lark apparently breeds across North Africa, from Mauretania to Sudan and the Arabian Peninsula, but occurs sporadically to the north, having been recorded from Jordan, Israel and Lebanon. Its identification and status have been discussed in detail recently (Round & Walsh, *Sandgrouse* 3: 78-83).

P. D. ROUND

Notes



Hybrid resembling Ring-necked Duck On 18th March 1984, a Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* was reported from Tottenhill Gravel-pits,

Norfolk. N. Bostock, myself and others went to see it. At about 150m it resembled a male Ring-necked Duck, but at closer range in good light a number of features pointed to its being a hybrid Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* × Pochard *A. ferina*. Its size, shape and structure were much as Tufted, but its bill was very slightly deeper-based and a short, distinct tuft to its rear crown suggested the peaked crown of Ring-necked. Its bill was blue-grey with a black tip and a conspicuous white subterminal band. In poor light its head appeared blackish, but in good light it looked distinctly dark reddish-brown. Its breast and tail area were black, but its mantle and back were

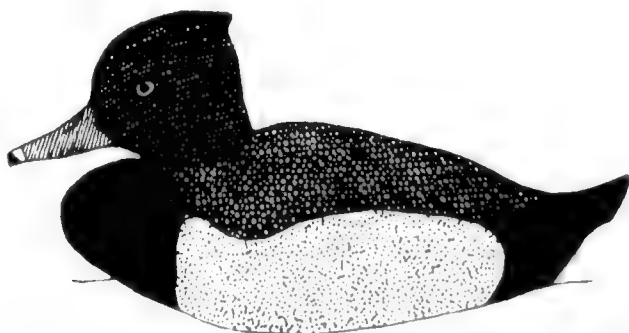


Fig. 1. Hybrid duck *Aythya*, Norfolk, March 1984 (S. J. M. Gantlett)

dark grey. Its flanks were uniform pale grey, with a very slight brownish tinge. Its eyes were orange-red. In flight, the duck showed a bold greyish wing stripe on the primaries and secondaries. A first-winter male Ring-necked Duck could quite closely resemble this individual (see *Brit. Birds* 75: 327-328), although by mid March first-year *Aythya* ducks should normally be approaching adult plumage.

S. J. M. GANTLETT

14 Bracken Way, Grimston, King's Lynn, Norfolk

Although the parentage of this duck is uncertain, we are publishing this note to draw attention to the possibility of confusion of such hybrids with Ring-necked Duck. Eds

Grey Plovers associating with inland flocks of Golden Plovers The note on Grey Plovers *Pluvialis squatarola* associating with inland Golden Plovers *P. apricaria* in winter in Buckinghamshire (*Brit. Birds* 75: 127) prompts me to record the following. In February and March during 1935-71, on high ground at Saltford and Marksbury, Avon, about 32km in a direct line from the Bristol Channel, I occasionally found up to three Grey Plovers at a time with wintering flocks of Golden Plovers. It seems that there was a marked movement of Golden Plovers, following which the Greys were present. I have not associated their occurrence with adverse weather conditions in the Bristol Channel.

BERNARD KING

Gull Cry, 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall

David Staincliffé has also informed us of a Grey Plover he watched on 12th November 1978, near Keighley, West Yorkshire, in the middle of about 300 Golden Plovers; it reacted aggressively towards any Golden Plovers which came within about 1.5m of it. It is apparent that Grey Plovers do occasionally occur inland in winter with Golden Plovers; we shall not, therefore, be publishing further notes on this subject. Eds

Aggression of albino Dunlin towards other waders During 17th-29th August 1981, at Dawlish Warren, Devon, I observed a completely albino Dunlin *Calidris alpina* in apparently first-autumn plumage. I watched it on eight days, during which it persistently showed aggressive behaviour towards the other Dunlins present, and also to Sanderlings *C. alba* and Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula*, both while feeding near the high-water mark and occasionally when in roosting parties. It did not appear to occupy any fixed territory and moved around at all times in flocks of other small waders, defending the area immediately around itself. Crouching with its neck sunk into its 'shoulders' and its bill pointing ahead, it ran at intruders, causing them to withdraw as if in panic; when it broke off from a roosting position and challenged the nearest resting wader, the latter invariably became aware of its aggressor only at close quarters, whereupon it leapt vertically into the air in alarm. The other waders appeared to be very wary of it, and at no time did I see the aggression returned. Confrontations took place a few metres either side of the high-water line in areas of sand or mixed sand-mud, where food was probably in relatively short supply. I can find no mention in the literature of an albino bird adopting aggressive behaviour, although there are a number of references to albinos being the recipients of harassment (*Brit. Birds* 71: 357-358; 73: 588; 74: 266).

C. W. STONE

117 Kingsdown Crescent, Dawlish, Devon EX70HB

Aberrant Curlew in Gwent and South Glamorgan On 9th August 1983, at Sluice Farm, Gwent, C. Jones had brief views of an unusually plumaged curlew *Numenius*. From 10th to 15th August, at Sluice Farm or the adjacent Peterstone Great Wharf, Gwent/Rumney Great Wharf, South Glamorgan, it was observed daily by about 15 people. It was readily picked out, in flight and at rest, from a roosting flock of up to 500 Curlews *N. arquata* and Whimbrels *N. phaeopus* by its distinctive behaviour and appearance. The following is compiled from notes by M. Chown, R. G. Smith and myself.

SIZE As large, long-billed Curlew.

BEHAVIOUR Often asleep when rest of flock alert; when they had flown, would remain with laggards. Not concordant with flock in flight.

UPPERPARTS Uniform rust-brown with indistinct paler supercilium; neck uniform rust-brown, with no demarcation between it and head, upperparts or underparts. Rest of upperparts and upperwings deep brown, darker than on normal Curlew; rump paler 'grey-yellowish-brown', appearing all-dark at a distance, tapering up back; tail pattern as on Curlew.

UNDERPARTS Breast, belly and undertail-coverts rich rusty-brown. Underwing-coverts creamy-white, contrasting sharply with completely dark rusty-brown body; remainder of underwing darkish (but much less dark than body), with series of narrow darker lines parallel with trailing edge on primaries; darker area noticeable in region of under primary coverts and primary feathers, roughly at carpal joint.

BARE PARTS Bill very long, dark brown with pink base to lower mandible. Legs dull bluish-grey. Eyes dark.

The notes were submitted to the Rarities Committee. All members who commented thought that the bird was a Curlew. Suggested theories for its appearance included the spreading of an area of light oiling during preening; and plumage staining from preening with a muddy bill, the mud having a high iron content. Neither, however, is convincing, because of the

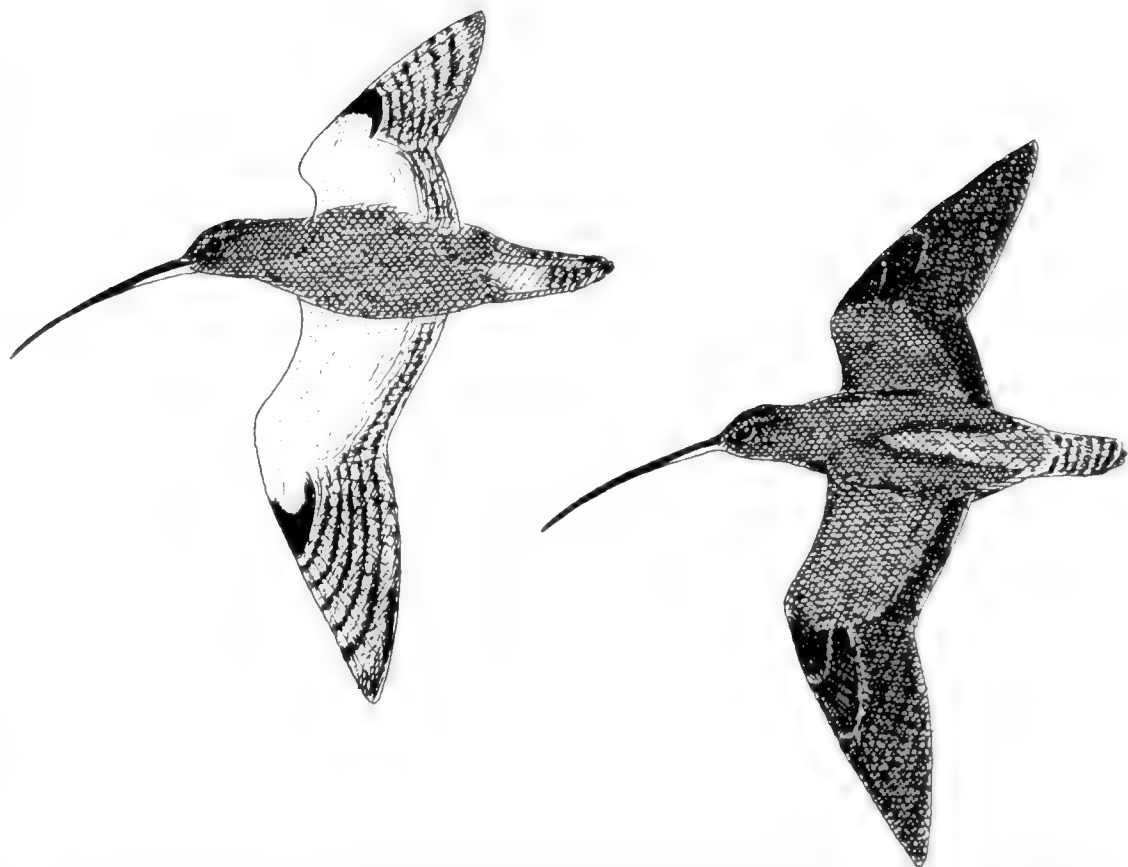


Fig. 1. Aberrant Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Gwent and South Glamorgan, August 1983 (S. N. G. Howell, from original sketches by Nigel Odin)

bird's pale underwing-coverts. Leucism has apparently been recorded for Curlews, but this individual seems to have possessed an excess of erythrism affecting both the normally pigmented and the usually white plumage areas. If this was the case, and if it could occur also in the Whimbrel, claims of the Nearctic race of Whimbrel *N. p. hudsonicus* in Britain must be closely scrutinised. Other possibilities, however remote, are aberrant Eastern Curlew *N. madagascariensis*, or a hybrid between Curlew and, for example, Eastern Curlew or Long-billed Curlew *N. americanus*.

Records of similarly plumaged Curlews, with notes on behaviour, would be welcome, as would correspondence on the likely causes of such plumage and behavioural aberrations. I thank P. G. Lansdown for commenting on the above, and S. N. G. Howell for drawing the figures from the field notes and my field sketches.

NIGEL ODIN

4 Y-Goedwig, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF46UL

Since the dark-rumped Eastern Curlew seems as likely as Little Whimbrel *N. minutus* to stray to Western Europe, we felt that this aberrant Curlew should be noted, as a potential identification pitfall. Details of other records of such individuals will be welcomed, but will be filed for reference or summarised and not published individually. Eds

Redshank feeding on paved area On 1st January 1982, during a prolonged freeze, near North Shields Fish Quay, Tyne & Wear, I sketched and photographed a Redshank *Tringa totanus* feeding with a Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* and a Common Gull *L. canus* on fish remains on a paved area faced by several lock-up fish merchants' stores. The Redshank allowed an approach by car to about 10m, and I watched it for about an hour. It



Fig. 1. Redshank *Tringa totanus* contorting itself to feed on fish waste in boxes, Tyne & Wear, January 1982 (Frederick J. Watson)

pecked at fish waste on the ground, and on several occasions probed in a determined manner at fish remains in and between empty wooden and plastic crates stacked against the brick wall.

FREDERICK J. WATSON

*The Old Farm Cottage, Greenhead Farm, Church Lane, Shepley,
near Huddersfield HD8 8AF*

Swift catching oak-eggar moths During the afternoon of 2nd July 1981, I watched about 40 Swifts *Apus apus* feeding over an area of Derbyshire moorland. On several occasions, one chased and tried to catch large, low-flying oak-eggar moths *Lasiocampa quercus*; after several attempts, one particular Swift caught and engulfed two oak-eggars. It appeared that, because these moths have a wingspan of 45-75 mm, the strike needed to be made when the moth was at a suitable angle; other attacks resulted in complete misses, or the moth being knocked to one side. The same moth was repeatedly attacked until either it was caught or it sought cover in the heather *Calluna vulgaris*. Although I visited the area again many times during the following weeks, when Swifts were always present, only once (on 4th July) did a Swift attempt, twice (unsuccessfully), to catch one of these large moths.

DAVID SNEAP

Torrington House, Lower Somercotes, Derbyshire

Dunnock singing at night I was surprised that the note on a Hedge-Sparrow [Dunnock] *Prunella modularis* disturbed into song by a noisy train (or its ground vibration) was considered so unusual because it happened at night. Any dishonest angler fishing without a permit at night, because fish bite best then, has to avoid disturbing a roosting Hedge-Sparrow or the bird will protest with territorial song and let the keeper know. A memory of schooldays, when I was cycling on a windy night with an oil-lamp which would not keep in so continued in the dark until an unseen stone sent me head over handlebars into the shrubbery, is that I sat up with a Hedge-Sparrow singing its head off in protest at my disturbing its sleep. Cuckoos

Cuculus canorus, Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and most songbirds protest at such nocturnal intrusions into their roosting haunts.

ERIC HARDY

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At 20.20 GMT on 9th April 1976, between Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, a Dunnock sang a full song a few seconds after a long express passenger train had passed. It was probably roosting very close to the line. Although the noise or draught presumably disturbed it, the considerable amount of light from the carriages may have induced it to sing. During 1973-76, other colleagues and I were engaged on another project at this site on many spring nights from dusk to about midnight, but this was the only occasion on which a Dunnock was heard singing. N. E. GAMMON

Cristin, Dwyran, Yns Môn, Gwynedd

Cutaneous diseases in a ringed Dunnock population During six years' observation in 1976-81 of a largely colour-ringed population of Dunnocks *Prunella modularis* in a habitat including scrub, bog, lakeside and conifer woods, and of a small population in a garden, I kept notes on the incidence of cutaneous diseases. The symptoms noted were alopecia (feather loss) on the head and some leg or foot trouble which causes a bird to use only one leg when hopping, giving it a crippled appearance. Judging from Blackmore & Keymer (*Brit. Birds* 62: 316-331), the probable cause of alopecia of the head is a fungal infection: mycotic dermatitis typically attacks the head region and results in a bald-headed appearance with a sharp demarcation between the bald area and the feathering. There were no external signs of leg or foot trouble, but a male trapped in mid February 1977 (ringed 13 months previously) had his ringed leg sufficiently swollen to warrant transferring the rings to the other leg; towards the end of May, it was holding up the swollen leg and hopping in crippled fashion. Again judging from Blackmore & Keymer (62: 316-331), this is probably a viral complaint, or bird pox.

From a total of 25 marked males monitored through 44 breeding seasons, plus a further four unmarked males with marked mates monitored through four breeding seasons, there were seven examples of alopecia and four of leg trouble, one male being subject to the latter in two consecutive seasons: thus, an average of 25% of males per breeding season showed some form of cutaneous disease. None of 13 marked females monitored through a total of 28 breeding seasons, plus three unmarked females with marked mates monitored through three breeding seasons, showed alopecia, but one showed leg trouble: thus, an average of 3% of females per breeding season showed some form of cutaneous disease.

In Blackbirds *Turdus merula*, alopecia of unknown cause was found in 14 males and in five females (62: 316-331). In our ringed Dunnock population, females have a higher annual survival than males (80% compared with 60%: Snow & Snow 1982, *J. Yamashina Inst. Orn.* 14: 281-292), and it seems likely that the difference may be related to these cutaneous diseases. Six marked males, now presumed dead, survived for an average of five months (0-11 months) after the onset of cutaneous complaint. The expectation of further life for an individual in a population with 40% annual mortality is exactly two years.

The onset of head alopecia has been in March (one), May (one), June (four) and July (one); in addition, a juvenile in mid June, about 14 days out of the nest, had a bare lump between its beak and its eye. The time of onset of leg trouble has been much the same: two cases started in each of May and June, and one male in his first breeding season started in July 1980 and again in April of the following season. The history of alopecia in three males seems worth detailing:

(1) On 13th March, an unringed male (with a ringed mate) had spikey untidy feathers on its forehead; by 17th April, this had developed into a bare white lesion or lump on the forehead, which by 16th May was more extensive. This male was not seen again after 22nd May, when its territory was taken over by another male.

(2) A ringed male was five years old when alopecia started. It had held a territory for the previous three breeding seasons and throughout the autumn and winter, showing no signs of feather loss. On 10th June 1980, it had bare areas around the eyes and on the forehead; by 15th July, the latter area had extended back to include the eyes. This had not changed by 29th July, the last time the bird was seen until 24th September, when all the feathers had regrown. The Dunnock remained in its territory until 20th January 1981, after which it disappeared and was presumed dead.

(3) Another ringed male did not become resident in the study area until the end of May 1978, when already five years old. By 28th June, it had lost many feathers around its beak and forehead. When it was next seen in the same territory, in mid November 1978, its head feathers had regrown, but it had thickened whitish rings around the eyes, most marked on the left one; it also had a whitish area at the base of the upper mandible. It remained in this territory until 24th January 1979, after which it disappeared and was presumed dead. During the 1978/79 winter, this Dunnock was heavily dependent on artificial food and became very tame and unwilling to fly; possibly, its sight was becoming defective. This history closely resembles a case observed by Mrs A. Carney (reported in Blackmore & Keymer), in which midsummer alopecia of the head had gone by mid October, but was followed in November by a white horny growth around the eye eventually causing blindness and death in January.

BARBARA K. SNOW

Old Forge, Wingrave, near Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

Goldcrest imitating other species' calls On 4th March 1972, at Northaw, Hertfordshire, I found a solitary male Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* singing in a scrubby hedge in marshland. Its singing, although incorporating odd snatches of normal Goldcrest song, was made up largely of clearly identifiable calls of a range of species. The Goldcrest was first noted because of its imitation of the 'pee-pee-purr' call of a Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, but the 'chink' call of the Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* along with its variant 'twit, chink-chink' were freely interspersed. I watched the Goldcrest calling at not more than 3m, as it moved about the hedgerow; in the medley, it also uttered, although less frequently, the buzzing 'trrr, trrr' of a Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*, the 'tweep' of a Dunnock *Prunella modularis* and the sharp 'tzip-zuu' of a Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*. The whole medley was quite loud, audible at 30m, and was continued until I left after about five minutes. About half an hour later, the Goldcrest was relocated farther down the hedgerow, still singing in the same fashion, this time accompanied by two Long-tailed Tits apparently interested in the imitation of their call.

TREVOR J. JAMES

65 Back Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire

We know of no other instance of vocal mimicry by a Goldcrest. EDS

Spotted Flycatcher attacking grey squirrel Jeff Hunt's note on a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* attacking a red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 384-385) prompts the following. On 30th May 1982, in Middlesbrough, Cleveland, I saw a Spotted Flycatcher repeatedly (about 15 times) attack a grey squirrel *S. carolinensis* sitting in a tree. The flycatcher would glide down at the squirrel, sometimes appearing to hit it, but always flying away safely.

NEIL P. DUMMIGAN

26 Sedgefield Road, Acklam, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS5 8JP

Great Tit unhooking nut-bag On 28th December 1981, in Swansea, West Glamorgan, a Great Tit *Parus major* came to a feeding station in my garden where, among other things, plastic-net bags of ground nuts were suspended from the edge of the feeding table. In this case, the bag was almost empty so that, without resistant pressure, the tit was unable to extract a nut. It then flew on to the table, leaned over the edge, unhooked the bag with its bill, allowed the bag to fall to the ground, then followed it down; against an unyielding surface, it was then able easily to extract a piece of nut. This act was made very quickly after the initial unsuccessful attempt: perhaps suggesting a very rapid recollection of success in some similar previous circumstance.

DAVID G. P. CHATFIELD

3 Cyncoed Close, Dunvant, Swansea SA2 7RS

Call of Great Grey Shrike During the winter of 1983/84, at Priory Park, Barkers Lane, Bedford, I noted down a repeated shrieking call of a Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* as 'sheeck', 'shreek', or 'shree', usually uttered slowly and deliberately, eight to ten times, always from the middle or lower branches of a large bush. Although this is the call from which the shrikes' English vernacular name is derived, most identification guides do not even mention it.

DAVID KRAMER

7 Little Headlands, Putnoe, Bedford MK41 3JT

Behaviour of Magpies feeding on backs of large mammals Dr F. Coombs (1978, *The Crows: a study of the corvids of Europe*) did not mention Magpies *Pica pica* feeding on the backs of large mammals.

In April 1980, near Criccieth, Gwynedd, a Magpie was feeding among a flock of sheep; after feeding for some time on the ground, it flew on to the back of a sheep, where it appeared to take something among the wool; it then pulled at the wool a number of times (for nest material?), before being shaken off by the mammal. In October 1981, at Whipsnade Zoo, Bedfordshire, about five Magpies were feeding on the backs of white rhinoceroses *Ceratotherium simum* in a large enclosure; there was only one Magpie per rhinoceros and, when a second tried to land on the back of an already-occupied rhinoceros, it was chased off by the incumbent bird; again, the Magpies appeared to be pecking at something on the animals' backs, using their long tails for balance when the mammals moved about.

These observations raise two interesting points. Do Magpies defend the

animals on whose back they are feeding against other birds? Is the behaviour learnt and, if so, how widespread is it? One can often see Magpies feeding in the same field as cattle or sheep, but making no attempt to land on the animals' backs; as in the case of tits *Parus* attacking milk bottles (e.g. Perrins, 1979, *British Tits*), could this behaviour be spread from areas where it has been learnt to other parts of Britain?

DAVID WILKINSON

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Derek Goodwin (1976, *Crows of the World*, page 176) wrote: 'Magpies sometimes damage large domestic animals by eating or trying to eat the flesh from branding wounds, saddle sores or other injuries caused by human cruelty or folly.' He has commented that dried sweat (for its salt content) and ectoparasites are also eaten. Although infrequently recorded, the behaviour appears to be not unusual. Eds

Magpies apparently taking food from cattle I have twice watched Magpies *Pica pica* perched on or near cattle, pecking at the animals' hides and apparently securing food. Dr F. Coombs (1978, *The Crows: a study of the corvids of Europe*) made no mention of Magpies or any crows, other than Jackdaws *Corvus monedula*, feeding in this way.

The first occasion was at Crockham Hill, Kent, on 16th October 1983, when a Magpie was standing on the back and head of a calf that was lying in a meadow, pecking at it, and evidently searching for invertebrates. The Magpie then hopped to the ground near the animal's head, whereupon the calf twice lowered its head, and the Magpie reached up and appeared to take something first from the calf's ear and then from close to its eye. A second Magpie was feeding on the ground close to the calf.

The second occasion was similar, and concerned two Magpies feeding beside and then on a bull, also lying in a meadow, at Birling Gap, Sussex, on 28th May 1984. After pecking at the animal's back, first one Magpie and then the other hopped onto its head and pecked repeatedly at one of its ears and then from extremely close to its eyes. For most of the time, the bull was asleep, with its eyes shut, and showed no reaction to the birds, though each time that they pecked near its eyes the Magpies leapt up as if anticipating a hostile reaction from the bull. On neither occasion could I be certain that the birds were actually obtaining food, but their behaviour left me in no doubt that this was what they were seeking.

P. J. OLIVER

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Citril Finches and Crossbills eating minerals E. W. Flaxman's letter on communal mineral-eating by Siskins *Carduelis spinus* (*Brit. Birds* 76: 352) interested me. In May 1983, in the Sierra Guadarrama, central Spain, I noticed similar behaviour by Citril Finches *Serinus citrinella* and Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra*. On a cold day with frequent heavy rain showers, a flock of about 20 Citril Finches and four Crossbills repeatedly flew back and forth from nearby conifers to the side of an old stone road bridge. The Crossbills preferred a cavity hidden by the branches of a small pine *Pinus*, whereas the finches clung to the stonework, pecking constantly at the surface and crevices for loose mortar to extract minerals and grit.

M. P. FROST

12 Venland Close, St Cleer, Liskeard, Cornwall

Seventy-five years ago...

'I am naturally very reluctant to differ with so great an authority as Professor Collett, but I should like to remind the Rev F. Jourdain and Dr N. F. Ticehurst that apparently some doubt existed in Professor Collett's mind in regard to the effect of the abundance of the lemming on the fecundity of the Rough-legged Buzzard, Snowy Owl, etc., for he says, "Now it is a fact that many birds breed more abundantly when food is plentiful than under ordinary circumstances. This, for instance, has been shown to be the case with several species of the Owls that prey principally on small rodents, which, in certain years, are exceptionally numerous, but whether such increase in the procreative power is owing to the abundant supply of food, or is to be traced *rather* to the cause (whatever it be) which renders the small rodents *in that very year* so much more prolific than common, is still an open question" (Robert Collett, "Ornithology of Northern Norway", p. 38).' (*Brit. Birds* 3: 254, January 1910)

Letters

How many bird species in the world? In a recent book review (*Brit. Birds* 77: 280) mention is made of the '8,500-odd species' of birds in the world. A similar figure is quoted by the late Leslie Brown in his foreword to *A Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World* by Richard Howard and Alick Moore, which is reviewed on the same page. Yet Howard & Moore's checklist itself lists 9,003 species.

I realise that, with the debates between 'splitters' and lumpers', we can never be exactly sure of the world total, but surely we can do better than quoting it to the nearest 500?

S. N. ADAMS

44 Malone Heights, Belfast BT9 5PG

We asked Alick Moore to comment: 'S. N. Adams nicely illustrates the problem of trying to apply a systematic approach to the highly dynamic subject of avian taxonomy. Not only is it kept dynamic by the production of new facts, but it also depends upon the individual opinions of the listers, and, further, on the opinions of the authorities these listers follow, revealing a wide range of taxonomic views. For example, the Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* has been classed over the last 50 years as one, or as many as four separate species, according to the weight given to various field studies and proposals. It all depends upon what one accepts as a species.'

'Over the many years of listing species, the trend has been for the number to increase dramatically up to about the year 1910. Linnaeus's tenth edition in 1758 included 533 species. Latham in 1790 listed 2,951; Vieillot in 1823 raised this to 3,828; and Bonaparte in 1831 got to 4,099. Numbers then increased rapidly, with Gray's *Handlist* in 1871 containing 11,162 species; Dubois in 1902 listed 12,509; and Sharpe in 1909 included 18,937. Since that time, 'lumping' has reduced numbers by about 50%. Nevertheless, with such a history it is hardly surprising that now we are left with a total that varies so widely. One could perhaps justify a maximum today of 9,400 species and a minimum of 8,700; something around an 8% variance.'

Eds

Possible passage route of Fair Isle Yellow-browed Bunting I was interested by the account of the Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* on Fair Isle, Shetland, in October 1980 and its possible passage route (*Brit. Birds* 76: 217-225). Any assessment, however tentative, of the route of an overland migrant is full of pitfalls, since one does not know how long the bird has been on passage. In this case, a great-circle route, as suggested by the authors of the account, is incompatible with one using the easterlies of the Siberian anticyclone. Such a route from the breeding grounds to a

region favourable for a downwind passage on the northeasterlies (i.e. somewhere in Norway) to Fair Isle would take a bird westwards across Arctic Russia between latitudes 60°N and 70°N. During the week before the bunting's arrival on Fair Isle, northern Siberia was under the influence of westerlies associated with a succession of frontal depressions moving eastwards to the north of the Siberian anticyclone. It is, therefore, most probable that the vagrant's route was indeed in the easterlies to the south of this high-pressure system. Since these easterlies were weak before 9th October, the bunting may have been on passive dispersal for some time before reaching the Caspian Sea area; here it would have come under the influence of strong southeasterlies over European Russia, thence into the frontal zone that had been affecting the Baltic states and Finland for a week or more, and thus into Scandinavia.

This trajectory, 'subjectively' calculated from the weather charts, assumes only short stop-overs, with an entirely downwind passage, and it is likely that other Far-Eastern vagrants recorded at the same time followed the same roundabout route. If this assumption is correct, it is intriguing to contemplate why they should have continued their flight, rather than gone to ground somewhere in the Baltic frontal zone.

NORMAN ELKINS

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Ship-assisted passage Perhaps I am alone in wondering about the 'logic' behind the seemingly inconsistent 'relegation' of certain birds to Category D. Yes, I'm thinking about those birds who take a break from beating the air towards a place they never reckoned on going and put down on a ship. The Cork Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus* (*Brit. Birds* 56: 163) and the Suffolk Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* (*Brit. Birds* 74: 403-404) are examples of proved or highly probable assistance which have resulted in this dubious distinction being applied to the birds involved. But what of the numerous vagrants, predominantly Nearctic, which turn up, but are not found guilty of having 'hitched' partial or more-or-less complete rides with ships? It seems, at least to me, that there is often a better-than-average chance that they may not have made the Atlantic crossing completely unaided. And then there are those birds recorded 'At Sea': great for pelagic species, but surely a passerine landing on an oil platform does so because it needs a break and would not make it to *terra firma* alive? So, to be strictly fair, should not many more birds be placed in Category D, or maybe even given a category of their own? I reckon these little fellows who have the presence of mind to rest on a ship are potentially the more successful pioneers in a mass of vagrants which, let's face it, are basically only the freaks and failures of the bird world.

STEVE N. G. HOWELL

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The Northern Flicker was *proved* to have crossed the Atlantic on board ship, so falls within the definition of category D ('Species which have been recorded within the last 50 years and would otherwise appear in Category A except that (1) there is a reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in a wild state, or (2) they have certainly arrived with ship-assistance, or (3) they have only ever been found dead on the tideline; also species which would otherwise appear in Category C except that their feral populations may or may not be self-supporting.

The main object of category D is to collect together the records of species which are not yet full additions, so that these are not overlooked if there are subsequent fully acceptable records.').

The latest (eleventh) report of the BOU Records Committee (*Ibis* 126: 440-441) states for the Suffolk Lark Sparrow: 'Identification was accepted and the escape risk is low; but the record does not match the pattern found for other American Emberizidae which have occurred in Britain and Ireland, so the species is placed in Category D.' This comment suggests that it is merely the aberrant time and place of the Lark Sparrow at Landguard Point, Suffolk, from 30th June to 8th July 1981 which has caused relegation to Category D. Most Nearctic buntings and sparrows that have occurred here have, however, also been in spring (61%, or 87% if the 13 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks *Phœucticus ludovicianus*, which have all been in autumn and winter, are excluded). Most have been in May with fewer in April, but 27% have occurred in June (including two staying over after May arrival). Admittedly, the latest arrivals were two White-throated Sparrows *Zonotrichia albicollis* on 17th (in Cumbria in 1965 and in Shetland in 1978), but another which arrived in early May stayed over four months (in Caithness in 1970). So a late June Nearctic sparrow is not unique. Neither is the locality exceptional, for there have been other accepted East Coast records of Nearctic sparrows (twice in Humberside, and in South Yorkshire, Suffolk, and at sea off Norfolk), as one might expect especially in the case of species probably well capable of overwintering on this side of the Atlantic, and probably appearing in Britain in seasons subsequent to that in which they crossed the Atlantic.

The vital point which influenced the BOU Records Committee, however, is that the Lark Sparrow does not breed within 400 km of the Atlantic coast, is not common within 800 km of it, and is indeed very rare there even as a vagrant, though there are a few scattered records. Unlike the North American sparrows and buntings which *are* on the British and Irish list, it does not have a migration route which takes it over the Atlantic Ocean or across the Gulf of Mexico. If it did, it would be more likely to occur as a genuine vagrant, or, alternatively, to drop onto a ship and occur as a ship-assisted stray.

Thus, it is not the risk of assisted passage that has led to the Lark Sparrow entering Category D rather than Category A. Indeed, if there was such a risk, that would enhance the species' claim to Category A status, for it is only proved (as distinct from suspected) assisted passage which is one of the disqualifications for inclusion in Category A. The essential point is that the BOU Records Committee, after sifting all the available evidence, considered that—slight though it was—an escape source was as likely as—or more likely than—wild occurrence (either by an unassisted crossing of the Atlantic or by assisted passage on a ship). With a reasonable doubt that the species has ever occurred here in a wild state, Lark Sparrow was placed in the 'pending file' of Category D. In the days before the BOU Records Committee introduced Category D (in 1971), records of such species would have been summarily dismissed as 'rejected'. We approve the present flexible system. EDS.

Announcements

Special Thailand 'package' for 'BB' readers If you are planning a trip to Thailand, some special arrangements have been made available for *British Birds* readers by Thai Airways International.

Knowing that birdwatchers generally want (1) flexibility, and (2) cheapness, the arrangements are not for a fixed period (stay as long as you like) and accommodation has been arranged for six nights (in two centres), so that you are free to make your own arrangements for the rest of your stay. These nights can be at any time during your stay. For instance, if you plan to stay for three weeks, your three days in a first-rate hotel could be immediately when you arrive (as you are arranging car hire and so on), or mid-way (when you feel like some luxury after returning from some strenuous birdwatching), or at the end of your trip (when you may feel like a bit of a holiday: shopping and 'acting the tourist' in Bangkok). You will, of

course, fly London/Bangkok/London by Thai Airways International (the Royal Orchid Flight, generally considered the most relaxing of the longhaul eastern flights — 'smooth as silk' is their motto). The second centre is Chiang Mai: convenient for the renowned birding mountains, Doi Inthanon, Doi Suthep and Doi Pui.

The package consists of:

- (1) Thai Airways International flight from London to Bangkok.
- (2) Three nights' accommodation with American breakfast (and optional city tour included) at Erawan, Indra or Ambassador Hotels in Bangkok (to be taken at any time during your trip).
- (3) Air ticket for internal flight from Bangkok to Chiang Mai.
- (4) Three nights' accommodation with American breakfast at Suriwongse Hotel in Chiang Mai (to be taken at any time during your trip).
- (5) Air ticket for internal flight from Chiang Mai to Bangkok.
- (6) Thai Airways International flight from Bangkok to London.

The total cost of all six components is £665.00 (twin room, sharing) or £720.00 (single room). This package is valid until 30th October 1985.

These arrangements have been made especially for birdwatchers. The hotels are first class. The package represents superb value and is thoroughly recommended by *British Birds*. We are delighted that Thai Airways International has made these arrangements on our behalf and we hope that many readers take up the offer. (The price includes no percentage to *British Birds*, so our recommendation is completely unbiased!)

All bookings should be made with Thai Airways International, 41 Albemarle Street, London W1X 3FE (telephone 01-491 7953) and, of course, you must make it clear that you are a *British Birds* reader.

Have a good trip!

Extra baggage allowance on Thai Airways International Bird-watchers tend to want to take a lot of equipment on foreign trips: tents, tripods, photographic gear, wellingtons and other boots, reference books, and so on. We have, therefore, negotiated with Thai Airways International for *British Birds* subscribers to take an extra 5kg of luggage completely free on any Thai International flights, provided that the flight is booked through their London Office at 41 Albemarle Street, W1X 3FE. This concession remains valid until 31st October 1986. Subscribers should take or send a copy of this announcement when making their booking, so that the tickets can be marked to show the extra weight allowance.

'Mystery Photographs Book' Despite the fact that the prize of £1,000 and a pair of Zeiss West binoculars has been won (*Brit. Birds* 77: 572), we have had so many requests for copies of this book that it is now again for sale. Apparently the complexities of the solution to its secret have intrigued even those who did not themselves try to solve the mystery. Although it originally cost £4.80, it is now for sale through British BirdShop (see page xv) for £1.50. The price includes a copy of the full explanation of the puzzle and the identities of all 43 species (cf. *Brit. Birds* 77: 608-612).



'The "British Birds" List of Birds of the Western Palearctic'

This completely revised, authoritative list of West Palearctic birds is now available for sale through British BirdShop. It is in a new *BB*-style format, with 15 columns for use during field trips and so on. The standard price is £1.85, but anyone using the British BirdShop order form to purchase another book (or bird-sound recordings) *at the same time* can obtain a copy of this list for the reduced price of £1.00.



Custom-printed, personal 'British Birds' indexes 1946-83 The cumulative index of all papers, notes, letters and photographs appearing in *British Birds* since 1946, which was announced in the January 1983 issue, has been revised to include 1983, and this up-to-date version is now available to subscribers. The index is held on a micro-computer and, because of the flexibility which this offers, it is possible to provide indexes relating to individual species or groups of species as well as for a wide range of different subjects. The latter consist of: identification, habitat, distribution and status, mortality, migration, food and feeding, behaviour, voice, breeding biology, physiology, classification, and photographs. Thus, listings can be produced of, for example, all behaviour notes, or of all entries on seabirds, or on the distribution and migration of the Kestrel, or any other combination of species and subjects, and for any or all years from 1946 to 1983.

The index has been compiled from the comprehensive indexes published with each volume. It has been restricted to birds (i.e. not authors' names, book reviews, etc.), and nor does it include entries from regularly recurring features, such as the annual reports on rarities, ringing, and rare breeding birds, nor 'European news' or 'Recent reports', as these can be located

readily in each volume. It does, however, include all photographs from these features. It also includes all entries for species mentioned in, for example, papers on the birds of a particular area. Where an entry relates to more than one of the subjects given above (e.g. on the identification of a species illustrated with photographs), it will appear in an index of identification entries, as well as in one of all photographs, though only the once if both subjects are combined.

It is necessary to make a small charge for the indexes to cover such costs as paper, computer entry, and operation. Indexes will be provided on fan-fold computer paper with approximately 45 entries per page, and be charged at the rate of 3p per page, plus postage. It is estimated that the entire cumulative index since 1946 runs to some 19,000 entries, so taking up about 450 pages.

Subscribers who would like an index (or indexes) are invited to write, setting out their requirements. These should include the run of years required, the species or groups of species, and the subjects. Please do not send any money with your order: you will be invoiced. If wanted, an indication of the size of the index asked for can be supplied before it is printed. Orders or enquiries should be sent not to the editorial office, but to Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT.

Front cover designs for sale The original unframed drawings of the pictures on the front cover of *BB* are for sale each month in a postal auction. The pictures are usually 1½ or two times the published size. These sales help not only the artists, but also *BB*, since the artists donate 20% to the journal. It is also a way for *BB* readers to acquire—for themselves or as a present for a friend—top-class bird art at very reasonable prices. During the past year, successful postal bids have ranged from £12 to £87; the average has been £37. Why not send in your bid each month? If you are successful (if your bid is the highest, and it exceeds the artist's reserve price), you will be asked to pay the sum you bid, plus £1.50 for postage and packing. Send your name, address and telephone number and your bid (no money at this stage), to arrive before the last day of the month, to Cover Bid, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Bird Photograph of the Year This annual competition will again be run by *British Birds* and sponsored by Matthew Gloag & Son Ltd, proprietors of 'The Famous Grouse' whisky. The rules are as follows:

Up to three colour transparencies, each taken during 1984, may be submitted by each photographer. They will be judged not only on technical excellence, but also on originality and scientific interest, and aesthetic appeal and artistic composition. Preference will be given to photographs taken in Britain and Ireland, but those of species on the British and Irish list taken elsewhere are also eligible. Photographs must not have been submitted for publication elsewhere (though, of course, the copyright remains with the photographer and use subsequent to publication in *British Birds* is unrestricted). The photographs by winner and runners-up may be used at the discretion of the judges in promoting *British Birds* or the competition. A brief account (not more than 200 words) should



be enclosed with each, giving the circumstances in which obtained, the method used, technical details (focal length of lens and make of camera and film), locality, date and photographer's name and address. Transparencies will be returned only if accompanied by a suitable SAE. Entries are accepted only on the above conditions.

The judging panel will consist of Dr R. J. Chandler, Eric Hosking, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Don Smith.

Past winners of this competition have been Michael C. Wilkes (1977), Peter Lowes (1978), Dr Edmund C. Fellowes (1979), Don Smith (1980), Richard T. Mills (1981), Dennis Coutts (1982), David M. Cottridge (1983) and John Lawton Roberts (1984). The 1985 award (cheque for £100 and engraved Red Grouse trophy) will be presented to the winning photographer at a Press Reception in London. The runners-up will be welcome to attend the award presentation.

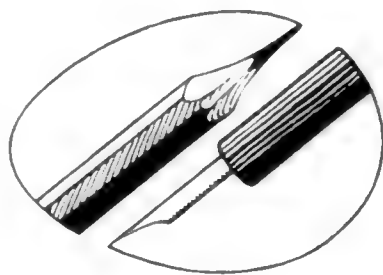
The closing date for entries is 31st January 1985. Transparencies should be clearly marked 'Bird Photograph of the Year' and sent to the editorial office at Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs The closing date for submission of prints for the twenty-sixth annual selection is 31st January 1985. Photographers may submit as many black-and-white prints as they wish.

The following details should be written on the back of each print: photographer's name and address, species, county (or country, if taken abroad), month, year, and technical details, such as make and size of camera, make and focal length of lens, type of film material, exposure and approximate distance from the subject. Prints will be retained in the editorial office as part of the reference collection and for possible use in the journal unless a request for return is noted on the back of each print and a suitable stamped and addressed envelope is supplied.

Entries should be addressed to 'Best recent work', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Bird Illustrator of the Year Amateur and professional artists are invited to submit four line-drawings suitable for reproduction in *British Birds* (pen-and-ink or scraperboard, but not pencil or wash). The subjects should be birds recorded in the West Palearctic (Europe, North Africa and the Middle East). Exact size is important: drawings should be the following sizes (width \times depth in cm) (a) 18.6×20.8 , (b) 16.35×6.9 and (c) 7.95×6.0 , for publication at two-thirds of those dimensions (the largest drawings (a) may, if preferred, be submitted at 24.8×27.7 , for publication at half-size). Each set of four drawings must include at least one each of a, b and c. Entries will be judged as sets. Drawings based on published photographs or drawings are ineligible. The announcements of the previous winners (*Brit. Birds* 72: 403-409; 73: 380-384; 74: 275-278; 75: 304-308; 76: 288-291; 77: 283-288) included suggestions intended to help future entrants. Entries need not be mounted, but should have a generous 'handling margin' around each drawing.



The judging panel will consist of Robert Gillmor, Keith Shackleton and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

The winner will receive £75 and an inscribed salver, and the two runners-up will receive £40 and £25. All three artists will also be invited to attend the award presentation at a Press Reception at The Mall Galleries in London, where a selection of the drawings will be on display. Artists whose work is displayed will also be welcome to attend the reception, which in previous years has provided a very happy occasion for meeting many of our top bird artists. The winners' entries will also be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Galleries. Previous winners have been Crispin Fisher (1979), Norman Arlott (1980 and 1981), Alan Harris (1982), Martin Woodcock (1983) and Bruce Pearson (1984).

Entries will remain the copyright of the artists, but are accepted on the understanding that they may be reproduced free in, or on the cover of, or for the promotion of *British Birds*. If accompanied by a suitable stamped addressed envelope, all drawings will be returned to the artists, but any selected for possible use by *British Birds* may be retained for up to 12 months after the award presentation. Each drawing must be marked clearly on the back with the artist's name and address (and date of birth if aged under 21, see 'The Richard Richardson Award', below), the identity of the species, and any other relevant information about the illustration.

The closing date will be 14th March 1985; the set of four drawings should be sent to 'Bird Illustrator of the Year', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

The Richard Richardson Award To encourage young, up-and-coming bird artists, a special award (a cheque and a book to the total value of £60) will be presented for the best work submitted for the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition (see above) by an artist aged under 21 years on 14th March 1984. The winner's entries will be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Galleries. This award is in memory of the famous Norfolk ornithologist and bird-artist, the late R. A. Richardson. The rules for entry are exactly the same as for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and entries by persons under 21 will automatically be considered for both awards.



'BB' badges Badge-toting birders can now obtain a free 'BB' badge merely by sending a SAE to Free badge offer, c/o P. J. Grant, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD.

Collins Publishers wish to announce that their offer (*Brit. Birds* 76: 588) will expire on 31st January 1985.

Requests

Please use 'British BirdShop' Subscribers' support of our special book offers and the Peterson Sound Guide offer has significantly increased the journal's income and enabled us to have extra pages of papers and notes. We hope that we have also provided a useful service to our readers.

Please support *BB* by looking down the 'British BirdShop' list each month and using this service whenever we offer an item that you want. By doing so, you will be helping us to provide a bigger *British Birds*.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Hayle Estuary developments Birders who have enjoyed watching many species on the Hayle Estuary in Cornwall (including quite a few rarities over the years) will be concerned to hear of damaging activities affecting the site. The owners, Tekoa (Hayle) Ltd, have produced grandiose plans for development of the Port of Hayle, many of which are detrimental to the bird interest. These include proposals for moorings for 240 craft, buildings and roads, all within the Site of Special Scientific Interest. Penwith District Council has already given retrospective planning permission for the tipping of rubble in Carnsew Pool, despite opposition from the NCC. Initially described as for the ducting of power lines, this infilling now provides a firm base for a road to the important high-tide roosting area.

The RSPB has called for a full public inquiry into the proposals, but to date these requests have been denied. Those who value the site should make their views known by letter to the Penwith District Council, St Clare, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 3QW, and the Department of Environment, Tollgate House, Houlton Street, Bristol BS2 9DJ. (Contributed by John Waldon)

Oil and Scotland *Habitat Scotland's* latest report, 'The Environmental Impact of North Sea Oil-related Developments on Scotland', has been written by J. Graeme Robertson. The purpose of the report is to detail how

North Sea oil has environmentally affected or changed Scotland, and to offer some constructive suggestions for reducing pollution risk. It is not, the author says in his introduction, 'to show that poor harmless Scotland is threatened by a vast conspiracy called the oil industry'. Three chapters deal with Shetland—the biggest and most important oil development in Scotland. The next chapter deals with the rest of Scotland, and is followed by one on the causes and sources of oil pollution. In the final chapter, J. Graeme Robertson discusses what can and must be done to help prevent marine oil pollution, adding, in a postscript which comments upon the Government's response to the Royal Commission on the Environment's Eighth Report, five major courses of action which Report Scotland recommends.

It appears to be a thorough report; it is certainly readable. Specialists will no doubt have their own views on the contents, but any reader with an interest in the sea and its birds will want to see this report. Copies are available, £7.50 (incl. p&p), from Habitat Scotland, Blaven Park, Portree, Isle of Skye.

'WingTips' We have just received the first issue of this new journal and, to quote its editor, Helen S. Lapham, '*WingTips* is for people interested in birds and who want to learn more about identification. It is an information source for what is happening in ornithology today.' She goes on to say that,

with the recent increase in professionally trained students and the technical nature of publications, amateur participation has become more difficult: comments which refer to the U.S.A., where the journal is published. *WingTips* hopes to have a number of regular features. One of these will summarise specific, current work on a single subject, citing recent papers, discussing discoveries, and comparing theories. The first such subject will be 'Helpers at the Nest', appearing in the second issue.

Other features will be short behaviour observations; notes on birding organisations—international to specialist; notes and news; meeting dates; information requests and letters. *WingTips* is to be published quarterly at \$10.00 plus postage by the editor, Helen S. Lapham, Box 226, Lansing, NY 14882, U.S.A. If you would like a sample copy send them your name and address before February 1985.

Speyside birding Any birdwatcher looking for extra experience or guidance to the birds of Speyside may be interested in two birdwatching activity weeks to be held in the spring of 1985 in that beautiful part of Scotland. The courses have the help of local RSPB wardens, but are organised by the Boat of Garten Tourist Association, a voluntary body. If you are interested, write to them at Lochail, Boat of Garten, Inverness-shire PH24 3BN.

Congratulations On Friday 26th October 1984, the Monks Wood Experimental Station celebrated its 21st anniversary with an Open Day. The station was also open to the public on the following four days, with current research projects on display.

New USSR handbook The first volume of the new *Handbook of the Birds of the Soviet Union* by V. D. Hlychev and V. E. Flint is being translated into German (by, amongst others, Dieter Wallschlager) and will shortly be published by A. Ziemsen, Wittenberg 4600, DDR. (Contributed by *Jeffery Boswall*)

Birds of Hortobagy, Hungary Birders visiting Hungary will want to know of a recent paper in English listing the birds of the Hortobagy National Park. By L. Horvath and L. V. Szabo, it lists 215 species (including 106 breeders) and is on pp. 391–107 of *The Fauna of the Hortobagy National Park, 1981*, edited by S. Mahunka and published in Budapest by Akademiai Kiado. (Contributed by *Jeffery Boswall*)

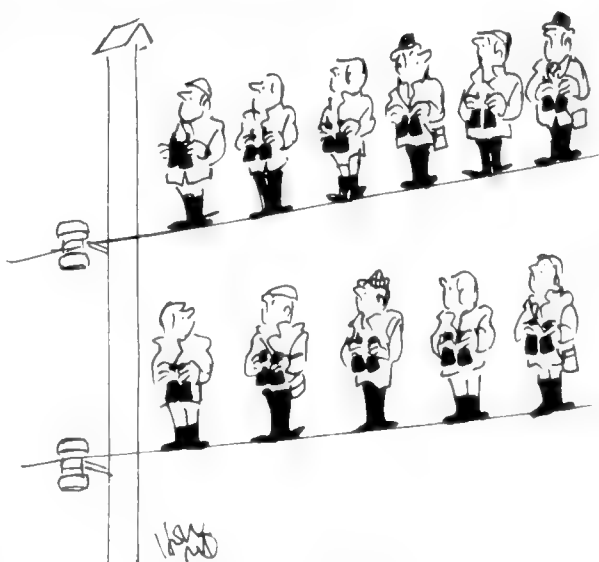
'Breeding Birds in Greater Manchester'

This attractively produced book gives the results of a breeding bird survey conducted from 1979 to 1983, and describes how 114 species compete—on the whole successfully—with 2.6 million humans. Based on the now-familiar breeding atlas format, it includes, among many interesting features, estimates for Mancunian populations of individual species. This is the first publication to treat Greater Manchester in such detail and dispels any preconceived ideas of this area lacking in ornithological interest. Copies can be obtained, price £5.95, from Trevor Sutton, 86 Brookdale, Healey, Rochdale OL12 0NY. (Contributed by *Barry Nightingale*)

'Birds of the Hants/Surrey Border'

A summary of the birds of a collection of 'local patches' is a departure from the usual county guide and this book covers a fairly arbitrary area 39 km × 29 km straddling four county boundaries. Full of interesting detail and punctuated by some excellent drawings, the systematic list includes a surprising number of rarities for an inland area. Essential reading for anyone visiting, living in or moving to the area. Copies can be obtained, price £7.95 (plus 65p p&p), from Hobby Books, 14 Dunmow Hill, Fleet, Hampshire GU13 9AN. (Contributed by *Barry Nightingale*)

Spotted in Peterborough



'When do we set off for the Scilly Isles?'

[This cartoon by Tony Holland first appeared in the 'London Day by Day' column by Peterborough in *The Daily Telegraph* of 23rd October 1984, and is reproduced by permission.]

Recent reports

Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

The dates in the report refer to October unless otherwise stated.

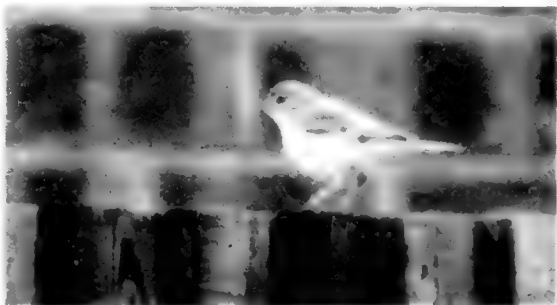
Weather and movements

The unsettled westerly weather of September continued throughout October, with temperatures remaining near to the average. The Continental high-pressure systems stayed far to the east, allowing the Atlantic depressions to travel across Britain and Ireland, usually on a track to the north. Early in the month, one travelled across northern France on 4th, 5th and 6th, with the easterly winds on its northern flank bringing the only substantial fall of migrants to the British east coast. On 6th, there were 5,000 **Redwings** *Turdus iliacus* at Landguard (Suffolk) and 1,130 at Sandwich Bay (Kent). Eight **Ring Ouzels** *T. torquatus* were also at Landguard, and two at Minsmere (Suffolk); **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* were reported in small numbers at all these locations. On 7th, Siberian **Stonechats** *Saxicola torquata maura/stejnegeri* were identified at Landguard, Minsmere and Blakeney (Norfolk), and further records came from Jersey (Channel Isles) on 17th and the Isles of Scilly on 13th (plate 32). Another wave of **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* also arrived, with 20 found along the East Coast from 4th to 7th; others included one at Blackpool (Lancashire) from 2nd to 4th, one at Point of Air (Clwyd), three in Ireland, and over seven in Scilly by 13th. The most impressive movement reported was of **House Martins** *Delichon urbica* at Sandwich Bay, where 85,000 were estimated passing northwards on 7th. **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus* continued to be reported after the September influx, with six in Ireland, a further five in Orkney, one in Blackpool on 16th and 17th, two in Merseyside, at Crosby and Meols, one inland at Alresford (Hampshire) on 9th, and an estimated nine in Scilly on 20th.

Rarer passerines

The variety of species seen was as usual impressive, but not the numbers, as the opportunities provided by the weather for vagrants to drop by was limited.

There were a few **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* (plate 30). *Phylloscopus* warblers reported included a **Greenish Warbler** *P. trochiloides* on Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) from 6th to 9th, **Arctic Warblers** *P. borealis* at Nanquidno (Cornwall) on 2nd and in Scilly on 13th, a **Radde's Warbler** *P. schwarzi* in Kent, three **Dusky Warblers** *P. fuscatus* in Scilly, and, arriving late in the month, **Pallas's Warblers** *P. proregulus* at Landguard and Hartlepool (Tees-side). The commoner *Hippolais* warblers, **Melodious** *H. polyglotta* and **Icterine** *H. icterina*, were quite scarce, but an **Olivaceous Warbler** *H. pallida* in Scilly from 14th to 23rd (plate 29) and **Booted Warblers** *H. caligata* at Landguard on 1st and 2nd and at Foreness (Kent) on 7th and 8th (plate 22) provided adequate



22. Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*. Kent. October 1984 (Tony Croucher)

compensation. A **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* was found at Hartlepool on 27th, in the very same bush frequented by Britain's third, recorded in 1969. A **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* was present in Scilly from 18th to 21st, with at least three **Tawny Pipits** *A. campestris* also there (plate 28), and another on Jersey on 13th. **Richard's Pipits** *A. novaeseelandiae* were scarce, but three at Porthgwarra (Cornwall)

on 13th were notable. One or two **Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* were present in Scilly from 13th, but perhaps more unusual there was a **Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*. Among the late-staying hirundines were **Red-rumped Swallows** *Hirundo daurica* at Sandwich Bay on 10th and in Scilly from 13th to 15th (plates 25 & 26). Vagrant buntings were more prominent than usual: **Little Buntings** *Emberiza pusilla* were found at Wells (Norfolk) on 5th, on Jersey on 20th, and there were four in the southwest; **Rustic Buntings** *E. rustica* appeared at Shellness (Kent) in early October and in Scilly, with three between 12th and 15th; a **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *E. aureola* was seen at Margate (Kent) on 7th; and a **Black-headed Bunting** *E. melanocephala* at Cley (Norfolk) on 25th and 26th. **Arctic Redpolls** *Carduelis hornemanni* provided the excitement on Fair Isle, with seven on 20th and ten the next day; there were two others on Whalsay (Shetland) and another in Orkney. Four **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrurus* were present in Scilly, and also a **Serin** *Serinus serinus* on 13th and an **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* on 14th. A remarkable collection of thrush records occurred there, with **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* and **Swainson's Thrush** *C. ustulatus* (plate 27) from the west, **Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* from the south, and **Eye-browed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* on 20th from the east (or far west?). Another report of the latter species from Haslemere (Surrey) on 12th might be of a first-year **American Robin** *T. migratorius*. Further Nearctic vagrants included two more **Blackpoll Warblers** *Dendroica striata* in Scilly (plates 23 & 24), others on Lundy (Devon) and on Cape Clear Island on 6th, and a **Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus* at Dungeness (Kent) in early October.

Waders

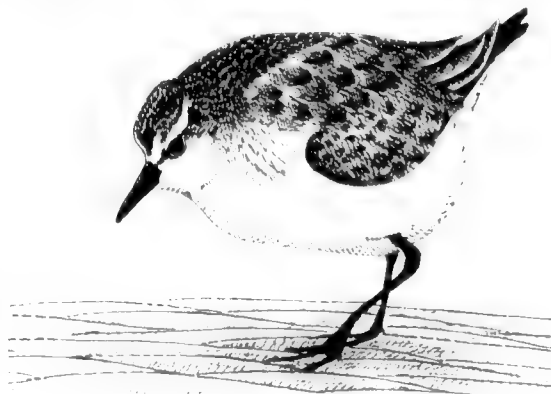
Eastern rarities were few, but included a **Sociable Plover** *Chettusia gregaria* at Neath (West Glamorgan) on 20th and 21st, a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* in southwest Ireland, and a **Temminck's Stint** *C. temminckii* at Killough (Co. Down) on 13th (plate 31). A **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* was a surprise record from Ythan (Grampian) on 14th.

Further additions to the autumn's Nearctic species list included a late **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* in Scilly and a **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* also there on 10th to 14th (plate 33), with another at Tring Reservoirs (Hertfordshire) from

5th. There were five more reports of **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, three in Ireland, and at Frampton (Gloucestershire) and Kirkwall (Orkney) on 26th and 27th; three more **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus tricolor*, at Gratham Water (Cambridgeshire) from 7th to 9th, West Huntspill (Somerset) on 16th and 17th, and at Sidlesham (West Sussex) on 12th; a further **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes*, at Durlough Reservoir (Somerset); a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* at Lough Foyle (Co. Derry) on 4th and 5th; two **Lesser Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica*, at Sennen (Cornwall) and at Cheddar (Somerset); a **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* in Co. Kerry; **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *C. pusilla* in Scilly, and at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) on 18th; and a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *C. fuscicollis* at Walberswick (Suffolk) on 6th.

Waterbirds

Seabird reports were few this month, but included a **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* at Birsay (Orkney) on 1st, **Little Auks** *Alle alle* off Landguard on 28th, at Holm (Orkney) on 23rd and at Newcastle (Co. Down) on 21st, and **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus* at Birsay on 11th and Brandon Point (Co. Kerry) on 20th. A sub-adult **Pomarine Skua** *S. pomarina*, complete with tail streamers, stayed inland at Eyebrook Reservoir (Leicestershire) from 21st, a rare opportunity to watch this species at length. Single **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini* were seen at Holme (Norfolk) on 5th and at Aber Dysynni (Gwynedd) on 18th, and a **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* reported from Dungeness on 17th was preceded by a record of one, possibly two, observed at sea 20 nautical miles (37 km) southwest of Plymouth (Devon) on 3rd. A **Royal Tern** *Sterna maxima* was claimed at Flamborough (Humberside) in early October, a **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* was seen at





Tacumshin on 15th, a **Forster's Tern** *S. forsteri* was seen at Penmon, Anglesey (Gwynedd) on 10th, and a record of **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* came from Chichester (West Sussex) on 6th.

An interesting movement of **Barnacle Geese** *Branta leucopsis* occurred off the Grampian coast, where 600 were seen moving south on 13th. The northerly winds present off the Norwegian coast the previous two days changed to southwesterlies as a weather front crossed Scotland and the North Sea. Reports of Nearctic ducks came from Ireland, with an **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* at Lough Beg (Co. Derry) on 13th and a **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* from Co. Kerry, and from the West Country, **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* being seen in South Wales and in Scilly on 2nd. Elusive crakes included a **Spotted Crake** *Porzana*

porzana at Newton Pool (Tyne & Wear), and two in Scilly on 9th, where three **Corncrakes** *Crex crex* were also noted during the month.

Birds of prey

A late **Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was seen at Wells (Norfolk) on 8th, after the easterlies, which may also have been responsible for **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* appearing in Scilly, also on 8th, and in Co. Down, on 13th and 14th. Also on 8th, an **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae* was a surprise visitor to Ythan. For the third year running, a **Gyr Falcon** *F. rusticolus* was seen at Lough Foyle, reported present on 6th and 7th.



23 & 24. Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*, Scilly, October 1981 (S. C. Hutchings)





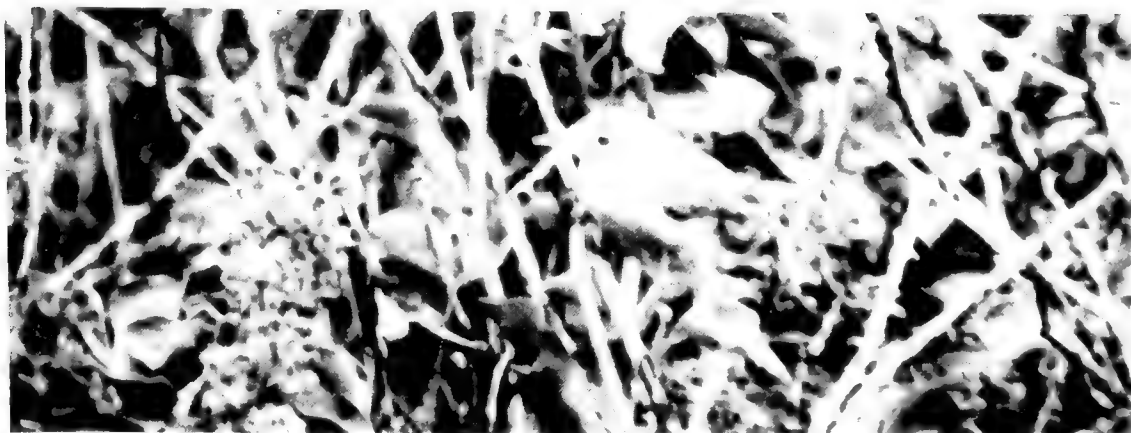
25 & 26. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Scilly, October 1984 (John Hewitt)



27. Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*, Scilly, October 1984 (S. C. Hutchings)

28. Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*, Scilly, October 1984 (Tony Croucher)





29. Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*, Scilly, October 1984 (John Heacott)



30. Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*, Scilly, October 1984 (S. C. Hutchings)

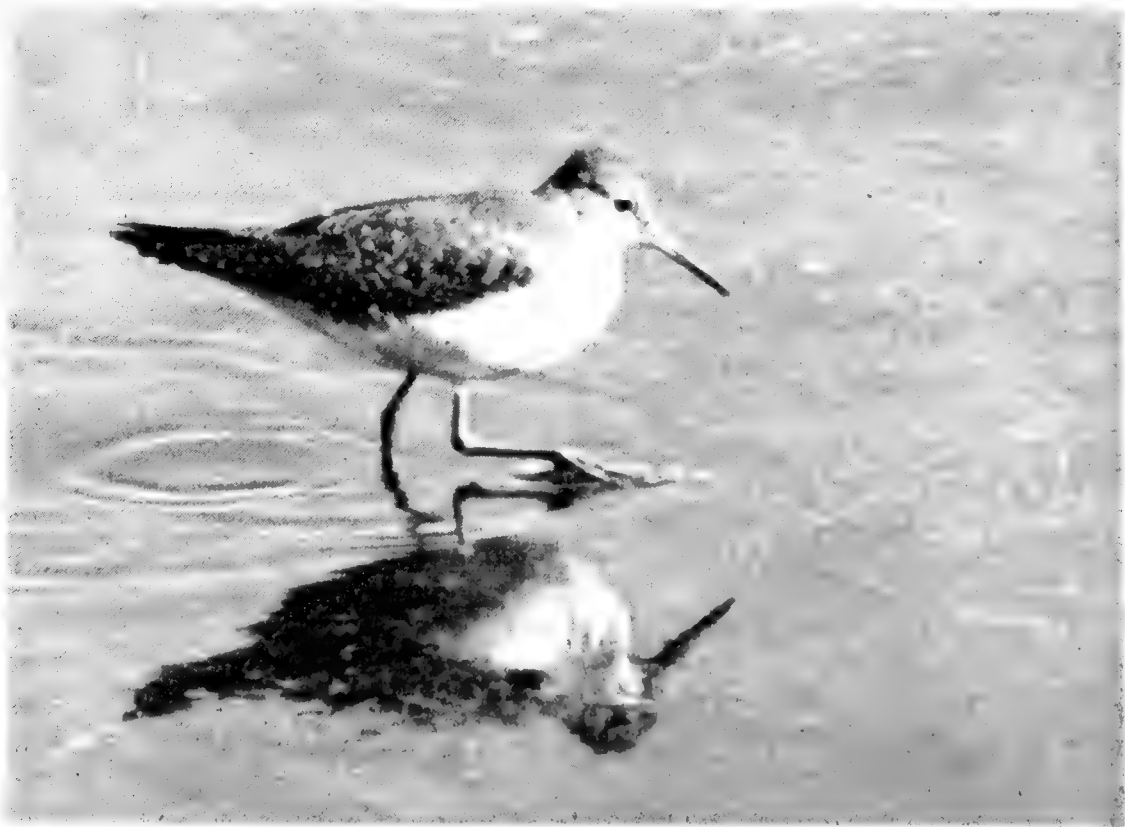
31. Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*, Co. Down, October 1984 (Brian Madden)





32. Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* of one of Siberian races *maura* or *stepnegeri*, Scilly, October 1984 (Andrew V. Moon)

33. Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, Scilly, October 1984 (S. C. Hutchings)



Latest news

The weather in the first half of December was very mild, and ornithologically the month was quiet. A **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* was in Belfast until at least 8th; the **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilym-*

bus podiceps was still at Ogwen Pool, Bangor (Gwynedd), but being very elusive; the **American Wigeon** was again at Ringstead (Northamptonshire); and a late-staying **Yellow-browed Warbler** was still present in Humberside.

Reviews

Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan. Compact edition. By Sálím Ali and S. Dillon Ripley. Oxford University Press, New Delhi & Oxford, 1983. 737 pages + 113 colour plates; numerous maps and line-drawings. £75.00.

Ever since the publication of the first of the ten volumes of the *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan*, in 1968, this has been the much-praised standard work on the birds of the subcontinent. The last of the ten volumes was published in 1974, only six years after the first. This review need not repeat the detailed critical analyses given by Sir Hugh Elliott and Stanley Cramp in their reviews of the individual volumes as they were published (*Brit. Birds* 62: 544-546; 66: 170-171; 69: 223). These ten volumes have been used so much over the past ten years or so that it is unnecessary to do other than remind readers of the excellent layout, generally good cross-referencing and usefulness of these volumes. The main problem for the ornithologist visiting these areas of the world has been the impracticability of carrying ten large volumes on air flights and, especially, on field trips. That problem is now solved. This new single volume combines the text of all of the previous ten at quarter size, and the plates of all of the previous ten at full size. So, instead of carrying ten huge volumes, one can now carry just one (it weighs just over 2½ kg). Anyone interested in the birds of this area, or who is likely to visit India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan or Sri Lanka, will have good reason to thank the Bombay Natural History Society and Oxford University Press for coming up with this easy-to-handle compact edition.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

The Birds of the Malay Peninsula, Singapore and Penang. By A. G. Glenister. Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur & Oxford, 1983. xiv + 291 pages; 8 colour plates; 8 black-and-white plates; many line-drawings. Paperback £10.95.

This is an unmodified reprint of the first paperback edition (1971) of a book which originally appeared in 1951. The book has an unusual plan: following brief introductory chapters, the main body of the text is divided into two parts. Part I briefly summarises key plumage features, while Part II gives a fuller species description, together with habitat and status information. Totals of 64 species are illustrated in colour and 86 in monochrome plates, photographs or line-drawings. The text describes all species of birds known to have occurred in the Malay Peninsula up to 1971. Those from southern Thailand, considered a part of the Malaysian faunal subregion, are covered in a short addendum.

The text places much emphasis on identification by colour. Plumage descriptions and bare-part colours are needlessly duplicated in the curious two-part arrangement of the text, while far too little emphasis is given to birds' shapes and habits. This is, perhaps, understandable as, when this book first appeared, the field-guide format had yet to become standard outside the USA. The author was, for his time, highly successful in producing an attractive, informative and compact book, but it is a format which is sadly inadequate for today. Some introductory sections ('Malayan Birds as a Hobby'; 'Bird Life of Towns and Gardens'; 'The Bird Life of the Hill Stations'; and 'For the Sportsman') reveal the book's

original intended appeal to the colonial administrators of the day. Today's birdwatcher is more likely to be found stalking resolutely along trails in search of pheasants, pittas, babblers and various other 'arch-skulkers' of the deep forest, especially lowland rain forest. Although such species are described in the text, they are under-represented in the illustrations, and only two of Malaysia's 50 species of babbler are illustrated in colour (and another three depicted in line-drawings).

Some positive attributes of the book include a compact table giving easily recognisable pmonics for the calls of some commoner birds. Appendix B lists all bird species known to occur in Sumatra, Java and Borneo. There is a photograph of a caged male Crested Argus Pheasant *Rheinartia ocellata*, a species which may no longer be held in captivity, and which only a handful of ornithologists have ever seen in the wild. Although this book does have colour illustrations of two species not depicted in King, Woodcock & Dickinson (1975, *Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia*), most other species are illustrated and described far more accurately in the latter.

It is unfortunate that no effort has been made to update this edition. Appendix D, added in 1971, gives the English and scientific names then used by the Malayan Nature Society and is included in this reprint even though some of them are no longer in current usage (the MNS and most other birdwatchers now follow the names of King *et al.*). Thus, the Dusky Thrush in the main body of the text becomes Grey-headed Thrush in the appendix, but the species actually referred to is Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*. Status information for many species is no longer current, sadly because so much lowland forest has fallen to the axe in the intervening years. Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi*, for example, is listed as '... fairly common locally in the lowlands of peninsular Thailand' even though it has apparently not been seen in the wild by any living ornithologist and is now listed in the ICBP Bird Red Data Book.

Of course, there are limits to the number of footnotes and appendices that can be added to a book before it loses any semblance of the original. Nonetheless, if any book deserved extensive revision before release, then this surely is it. Possibly the publishers were hoping to reap maximum profit from sales to an expanding or undiscerning birdbook-buying public in return for minimum outlay. Although a few Asian bird enthusiasts may purchase this book for historical interest, or for the sake of the completeness of their libraries, it will have limited utility given the availability of the King *et al.* field guide. Peninsular Malaysia, however, is poorly served even by this work, as many of the Sunda endemics which occur there are not illustrated. It is surely time that a fully illustrated field guide to Malaysian birds came into being.

The review copy supplied had a block of 16 pages missing.

P. D. ROUND

The Birds of the Wetlands. By James Hancock. Croom Helm, London, 1984. 152 pages; 113 colour plates. £13.95.

This book covers nine major wetland areas of the world, describing their histories, habitats, birds and conservation problems. The brief accounts, which provide a stimulating introduction to each place, and the useful hints on travel gave me a severe attack of itchy feet. It is sad that most of these sites are threatened by drought, development, pollution, or clogging vegetation. The largely inaccessible reedbeds of the Zhalong Reserve in China are hopefully free from such problems, and the Shinhamma Reserve in Japan has apparently been saved in the nick of time. The 19 pages devoted to area checklists of birds could perhaps have been more usefully filled; the one for Bharatpur seems to have been copied uncritically from the published list available previously (but apparently not currently) at the sanctuary itself. The author admits that his nomenclature has not been standardised, but the listing of the Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* under five different English names (and a curious mix of scientific names) serves only to confuse.

The most striking feature of the book, which alone makes it worth buying, is the colour photographs. It is not surprising, given the author's interests, that nearly half of the 102 bird photographs are of herons. Even so, the inclusion of 19 depicting white egrets is surely an excess of these, albeit attractive, birds.

The photographs are generally of a high standard, and so it is a pity that some, including a mislabelled Green Sandpiper, are marred by being 'bent' across two pages. A few are rather out of focus and could have been replaced by more shots of the habitat.

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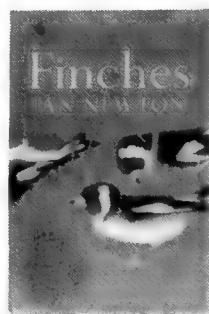


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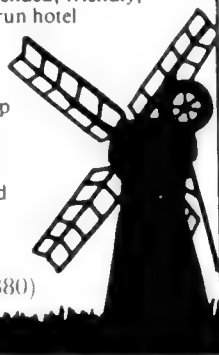
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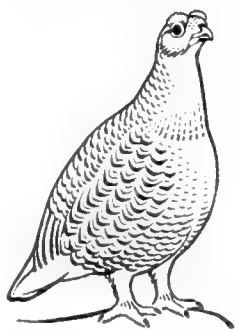
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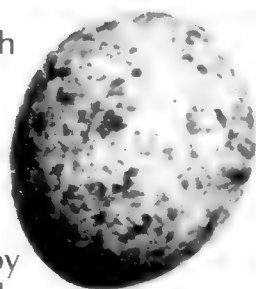
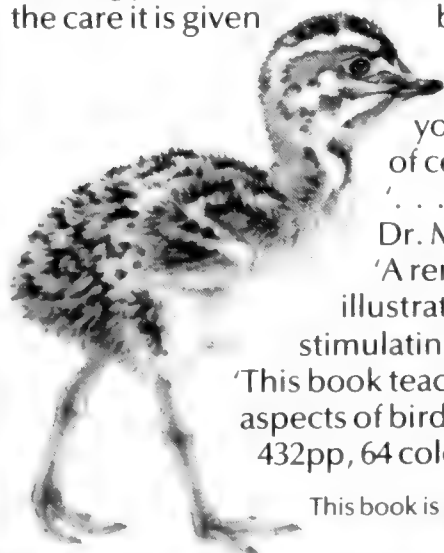
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Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1982



Compiled by Robert Spencer and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

This report continues the sequence begun in 1973. It is based on the same working methods and follows the same conventions. The preparation of it would not have been possible without the unstinting co-operation of numerous county recorders, and the Panel acknowledges with gratitude its deep indebtedness to them. It is hoped that this report, one function of which is to place each county's records in a national context, will provide some small reward for their labour.

Throughout Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the response from recorders has been almost total. With but one exception, the Panel believes that those counties for which no breeding records are listed here had no records to report. The exception referred to is Sussex, the recording committee of which county being what might be described, by analogy, as conscientious objectors. The Panel ventures to hope that it will eventually win their confidence, and hence their co-operation. It should perhaps be mentioned that some counties do, from time to time, withhold information relating to some particular species. This is, in fact, the consistent policy of the Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society which, whilst co-operating loyally with the Panel in all other respects, thinks it desirable to withhold all information which might reveal how many Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* breed in its county. Although it is the policy of the Panel to publish as much information as seems consistent with the well-being of the birds

concerned, the Panel has always been—and remains—ready to accept records on the basis that they should not be published (whether in detail or at all) until authorised to do so by the county concerned.

It is obvious from correspondence which the Panel has been having with county recorders that there is widespread concern for the safety of rare breeding birds, and not just because they are so obviously at risk from egg-collectors and people taking young from the nest. Several recorders have expressed anxiety about the growing numbers of birdwatchers who, apparently, 'do the rounds' of rare breeding species to get them on their year lists. The Panel members do not decry twitching and recognise that it can be an exciting and at times very skillful field sport. But if ever, or whenever, it jeopardises the breeding of those birds, the Panel believes that to be totally unacceptable to the large but unvociferous majority of caring, thinking birdwatchers.

This report highlights, as perhaps no other one has done, the ever-present and totally reprehensible persecution of birds of prey. The theft of Peregrines *Falco peregrinus*, a species not covered by the Panel, is well known, but surely must never become accepted through custom. In this report, the reader is referred to the entries for Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, for Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and, above all, for Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*. Some people are evidently pursuing their illegal interests with a ruthlessness more characteristic of the worst excesses of the Victorian era: we use the word 'ruthlessness' from the conviction that it cannot be mere thoughtlessness. It is partly with conservation in mind that the report sometimes uses the modern, larger administrative units rather than the old counties (e.g. 'Highland Region' rather than 'Inverness'). This practice may have to be extended in the interests of security, and the Panel anticipates that there will be changes in the style of presentation of its eleventh report, for 1983, now in preparation.

During 1982, the membership of the Panel was unchanged from 1981, being Dr L. A. Batten, R. H. Dennis, Ian Prestt, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (Hon. Secretary) and Robert Spencer. Whilst its work is supported, both financially and in other respects, by the NCC, the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*, the Panel is autonomous. Members are appointed as individuals, albeit with a special knowledge of, but not directly responsible to, the sponsoring bodies.

Brief comments on the year 1982

In a year with many encouraging features, the most novel was the first known breeding of a pair of Scarlet Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus*. Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis* were reported from more sites than ever before in recent times, and the Garganey *Anas querquedula* had by far its best year since the species was added to the Panel's list. Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* and Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* continued the steady consolidation of their position. On paper, Redwings *Turdus iliacus* had their best year since the Panel was formed, but the increased numbers may be partly attributable to detailed fieldwork, especially in Sutherland. Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* seem to have survived well in a winter with a severer than average

cold spell. In contrast, at least locally, the Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* suffered considerable depletion. For the first time in recent years, there was reasonably comprehensive cover of potential Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* terrain, with not discouraging results. A very thorough survey of the Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* provided an invaluable new datum line for future comparisons, but served to emphasise the extent of the species' contraction of range. This is, alas!, a long-term and well documented trend. For many species, the Panel's work tends to reveal the considerable extent to which population levels may fluctuate from year to year. The value of such information is self-evident, given a need to 'keep a finger on the pulse' of national populations. Indeed, the EEC Directive on Wild Birds correctly regards many of these populations as being European, and requires member states to monitor their numbers. It is for this reason that the Panel is seeking the advice of various experts about the problems of monitoring such difficult species as Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus* and Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, the data submitted for these in 1982 being fragmentary.

Systematic list

We have received no relevant 1982 records for the following species:

Great Northern Diver <i>Gavia immer</i>	Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Little Bittern <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Glaucous Gull <i>Larus hyperboreus</i>
Pink-footed Goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>
Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>	Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>
King Eider <i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i>
Smew <i>Mergus albellus</i>	Shore Lark <i>Eremophila alpestris</i>
Rough-legged Buzzard <i>Buteo lagopus</i>	Citrine Wagtail <i>Motacilla citreola</i>
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	Bluethroat <i>Luscinia svecica</i>
Pectoral Sandpiper <i>C. melanotos</i>	Great Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
Jack Snipe <i>Lymnocyrtus minimus</i>	Great Grey Shrike <i>Lanius excubitor</i>
Green Sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Woodchat Shrike <i>L. senator</i>
Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularia</i>	Lapland Bunting <i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Two sites, involving two individuals.

Essex One site: one individual summered.

County B One site: adult, in breeding plumage, 12th April to 8th June.

1981 Northamptonshire One site: adult in breeding plumage and displaying, 4th May to 24th May.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	0	1	2	5	2	0	1	3	3	2
Pairs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Individuals in summer	0	1	2	5	2	0	1	4	2	2

Presence in breeding plumage well into the summer suggests that breeding may yet occur in Britain.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

25 sites: 51-59 pairs breeding.

Inverness-shire 18 sites: (1)-(18) a total of 42-50 pairs, rearing 14-19 young. Some regular sites were not visited.

Kent One site: male in breeding plumage 19th to 20th April.

Perthshire Four sites: (1) pair first noted 9th June, one apparently sitting 11th July; (2) pair 9th June; (3) one 9th April; (4) one pair.
Strathspey Two sites: four pairs reared 2-5 young.
County A One site: about four pairs reared seven young.
1975 Inverness-shire ADDITION 11 sites: 23 pairs present, of which 15, and probably 18, nested. Six pairs certainly successful, probably 11. Eight young known to have fledged, and probably 13.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	22	25	23	23	15	18	27	36	35	25
Pairs proved breeding	52	58	54	70	42	37	58	53	52	51
Pairs possibly breeding	53	63	66	75	51	55	77	80	71	59

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*
Twelve sites: 11-21 pairs breeding.



Central Scotland Two sites: (1) three pairs, with five young, 7th August; (2) pair in August, but no young seen.
Gwynedd One site: adult 30th April to 5th August.
Northumberland One site: five pairs bred, with broods of two, three, four and five on 31st May.
County A One site: adult with one juvenile on 4th and 11th September.
County B One site: two pairs bred, broods of one and three seen.
County J Six sites: (1) adult in breeding plumage 8th August, two moulting adults 30th September, last seen 18th October; (2) single NA adult in breeding plumage on 15th August; (3) pair in breeding plumage 14th March; (4) single 13th June, three adults on 20th June, 23rd June and 16th July (two displaying on first date) with moulting adult on 27th July; (5) one from 27th July to 8th August, when moulting; (6) moulting adult on 14th August.

County K One site: single adult on several dates between 25th April and 24th July, two adults 24th to 28th July, then single adult until 2nd August.
1981 County A Two sites: (1) at least two pairs with well-grown young on 25th August; (2) pair and an immature on 15th April.
1981 County J One site: two adults in breeding plumage 5th August, staying to moult and last seen on 11th October.
1981 County K One site: one pair seen regularly displaying, with three adults present 9th to 27th June.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	4	2	4	2	7	6	6	9	7	12
Pairs proved breeding	18	15	2	10	11	13	12	11	5	11
Pairs possibly breeding	19	18	11	11	16	15	14	21	12	21

The largest number of sites ever reported to the Panel and at least 25

young hatched. The year 1981 now stands out as poor in an otherwise stable sequence.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*

One site: one again summered with Gannets *Sula bassana*.

Shetland One site: adult from 14th February to 10th September.

This was an exceptionally long stay, 14th February being a week earlier than the previous earliest return.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

15 sites: 1-35 pairs breeding.

Glamorgan, West One site: single on 18th July.

Kent One site: single booming briefly 16th May and 2nd June.

Lancashire One site: 12 booming.

Norfolk Seven sites: ten booming, but only for two were there sufficient indications of breeding to classify them as 'probable'.

Suffolk Four sites: 10-11 booming, one pair known to have bred.

County D One site: one booming in May.

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	18	17	21	19	16	15
Pairs proved breeding	0	2	1	4	1	1
Booming males	43	47	51	48	47	35

Two recorders attributed the fall in numbers to severe weather in winter 1981/82.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

1980 Hertfordshire CORRECTION The record published (*Brit. Birds* 75: 157) was for 1979, not 1980.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

One site: one summered.

Glamorgan One site: adult present 30th May to 10th August.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

One site: two feral pairs breeding.

Dunbartonshire One site: two feral pairs nested, one raising two young.

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

Two sites: single male and single female, both breeding with Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos*.

Gwynedd One site: male all year, six American Black Duck × Mallard hybrids on 19th November, breeding considered possible as only three hybrids were located in 1981.

Scilly One site: female paired with male Mallard, four young seen in July. In addition two apparent hybrids, one male and one female, were present in spring.

The reports suggest that a small hybrid population is becoming established at each site, but, without in-breeding, the American Black Duck genes will become increasingly diluted.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

18 sites: 7-32 pairs breeding.

Caithness Three sites: (1) female on seven eggs on 3rd May; (2) female and three young in June; (3) pair present 14th August.

Cambridgeshire One site: eight males and one female off 18th May, one pair only on 27th April, breeding not suspected.

Humberside One site: pair present 14th May to 17th June, then female only to 29th July.

Kent Three sites: (1) up to three during May, two in June, four in July, three in August; (2) pair on 22nd April and 5th May, male on 20th May; (3) female on 15th April.

Lancashire Two sites: (1) two males and one female in late May, three birds in June, one to three in July; (2) nine males and two females on 14th June.

Northamptonshire One site: pair from 15th April to 13th May, then one bird to 16th May.

Orkney Four sites: (1) female with five young, female with two young, probable brood of four, all on 16th July; (2) female with four young on 20th June; (3) nest with eight eggs on 6th May; (4) two females giving vigorous distraction display on 24th June.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) pair until 18th May; (2) pair until 23rd May.

Wigtownshire One site: three pairs probably bred.

1981 Northamptonshire One site: one pair 10th May and 16th June.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	3	7	11	10	15	10	19	15	16	18
Pairs proved breeding	3	10	12	6	10	7	10	9	8	7
Pairs possibly breeding	5	11	25	16	26	23	11	25	31	32

Temporary occupation of a breeding site, often for only one year, seems characteristic of the species in its present stage of colonisation.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

66 sites: 10-94 pairs breeding.

Avon One site: three pairs in late April, at least one pair present throughout the breeding season.

Bedfordshire Two sites: (1) one pair present from 27th March to 20th April; (2) a pair from 29th March to 9th April and a single on 27th and 28th June.

Buckinghamshire Two sites: (1) pair from 26th March to 14th May, then male only until 4th June, and male from 5th July to 21st September; (2) four males and three females on 2nd April, pair 19th April to 12th May, then male only until 21st May, three birds on 19th August. Single males at two other localities, on 23rd April and 27th May, were regarded as migrants.

Cambridgeshire Three sites: (1) two pairs present throughout April and male on 3rd June; (2) ten males on 18th May, one brood in June; (3) a pair on 19th April.

Cheshire Five sites: (1) pair on 27th March; (2) male and two females on 12th April; (3) probable pair on 13th April; (4) male on 10th July; (5) two immatures on 15th July.

Cornwall One site: one pair raised at least five young.

Derbyshire One site: pair arrived 27th April, female often absent, male last seen in late June.

Devon Four sites: (1) present from 4th April to 8th May, at least two males and two females involved; (2) up to seven, including five males, present from 25th March to 17th April; (3) pair present 27th March to 20th April; (4) pair(s) present on 1st and 11th April, thought to be passage birds.

Dorset Two sites: (1) pair reared four young; (2) two males and one female, with three juveniles, on 15th June.

Essex Two sites: (1) male on 22nd May; (2) male on 1st June.

Glamorgan, Mid One site: male on 13th June.

Gloucestershire One site: pair present 19th to 28th April.

Kent Two sites: (1) single male(s) on dates between 28th March and 28th May; (2) single male(s) 15th May to 24th July, two males on 31st July.

Lancashire Two sites: (1) two pairs 6th to 10th April, one pair remaining until 13th May, two males and one female on 17th May, reverting to single pair until 16th June; (2) male 28th to 31st May.

Lothians One site; male 2nd to 5th June.

Norfolk 17 sites: (1)-(17) one to four individuals at each on various dates, one pair known to have raised four young.

Northamptonshire Nine sites: (1)-(9) one to three individuals at each, including seven apparent pairs, but no evidence of breeding.

Nottinghamshire Number of sites not reported. About eight assumed passage birds, of which one or two may have summered.

Staffordshire One site; pair present 28th March to 23rd May, believed to have attempted breeding but failed.

Suffolk Six sites: (1) nest with six eggs, outcome unknown; (2) pair present; (3) pair bred; (4) two pairs bred; (5) two pairs thought to have bred; (6) male present on 23rd May.

Worcestershire Two sites: (1)(2) two birds at each throughout the breeding season, but evidence of breeding lacking.

1981 Cheshire Six sites: (1)-(6) only at one site was a pair present, and displaying in June, no further evidence of breeding.

1981 Lincolnshire/South Humberside Three sites: (1)-(3) thought probable that one pair bred at each.

1981 Northamptonshire One site; pair in eclipse plumage on 11th June.

1981 Yorkshire, West One site; pair present 16th April to 8th May. Almost certainly attempted to breed but thought to have failed.

	1980	1981	1982
Sites	34	48	66
Pairs proved breeding	4	8	10
Pairs possibly breeding	54	58	94

The Garganey is prone to occasional 'good' years and 1982 was obviously one of them, with the highest totals so far recorded.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

17 sites: 4-112 pairs breeding.

Argyll One site; female and two young in August.

Caithness Two sites: (1) two females on 24th July, female with brood of five on 30th July; (2) female with brood of three on 20th July.

Dunbartonshire/Stirlingshire One site; two pairs and additional male on 27th May, three pairs on 19th to 20th June, but no young located.

Co. Fermanagh Two sites: (1) two pairs; (2) 73 pairs, six broods seen totalling 33 young, earliest and latest known broods being 10th July and 27th July.

Inverness-shire Seven sites: (1)-(7) five pairs proved breeding, with broods of two, three, five, seven and seven; in all, 18 'possibles'.

Perthshire One site; five males and six females on 31st May, but none seen on 20th July.

Ross-shire Two sites: (1) female on 2nd June, male and female on 9th June; (2) three pairs displaying on 5th June.

Shetland One site; three males and two females, but no young seen.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	13	13	12	14	13	9	17	10	6	17
Pairs proved breeding	4	10	32	22	24	16	98	7	5	14
Pairs possibly breeding	133	142	159	159	156	141	128	113	82	112

As two localities were reported to have been inadequately covered, the improvement on the 1981 figure, both in sites and numbers, would appear to be genuine.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

11 sites: 27-57 pairs breeding.

Cumbria Four sites: (1) male 23rd May to 1st August; (2) male and female on 6th June; (3) female 11th June to 10th August; (4) two females on 2nd May.

Essex Four sites: (1) two males and one female summered; (2) one injured male summered; (3) female on 2nd June; (4) male on 5th June.

Lancashire One site: a female summered.

Perthshire Two sites: (1) two on 8th May; (2) one on 3rd June.

County B Eggs laid in 44 nests, all but two in nest-boxes. Only 27 clutches were incubated, possibly because of inclement weather; 26 nests were successful with 220+ young. In a census attempted in late July, 76 fledged young were located, indicating good survival.

1981 Cheshire One site: female summered.

1981 Northamptonshire One site: female present 27th June and 2nd July.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	1	5	3	8	12	18	17	11	13	1
Pairs proved breeding	3	3	3	5	6	12	22	26	29	27
Pairs possibly breeding	3	7	6	12	14	27	43	37	54	57
Young hatched	22	19	10	46	11	40	110	165	286	220

Although late spring/early summer occurrences are noted for English counties it would be unwise to attach too much significance to them. In Scotland, owing to the number of suitable localities, the difficulty of the terrain and a different attitude towards recording casual observations, many comparable occurrences must go undetected or unreported.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Two sites: 10-14 pairs present in breeding season.

Southern England The population of the main area is reported to have been stable for some years at 10-12 pairs.

Nottinghamshire One site: four birds, one pair attempting to breed. Failure was attributed to wet weather.

Excluding the main population referred to above, the position is as follows:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	1	3	2	7	8	8	3	3	8	2
Pairs proved breeding	0	1	0	0	2	1	1	2	2	1
Pairs possibly breeding	1	3	2	7	8	8	3	4	9	2

A marked decline in the number of counties, but whether this represents fewer birds or a failure to report is not known.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

47 or 48 pairs: 23 young reared by 19 pairs.

Central Wales A total of 47 pairs (possibly 48 if one nest was not a repeat after failure) of which 38 (or 39) laid eggs. A total of 19 pairs bred successfully, fledging 23 young. An additional 22 unmated birds, so minimum April population in breeding area was 116.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Total pairs	26	32	32	36	34	39	42	42	46	47
Breeding pairs	26	27	28	29	28	32	30	29	32	38
Successful pairs	10	9	15	15	12	13	14	21	18	19
Young reared	14	12	24	18	17	22	18	27	21	23

The figures suggest a very small reduction from the 120 recorded in 1981, following a severe winter. The number of breeding pairs was, however, the highest this century. Three nests were robbed by egg-collectors.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

32 sites: 63 young reared.



Dyfed One site: pair seen on several occasions from end of April to first week in May; one female nearby on 15th May.

Essex: Three sites: (1) female most of the summer; (2) female 9th June; (3) female 12th June.

Glamorgan, Mid One site: immature male 23rd March, female on 12 dates from 12th April to 18th May.

Glamorgan, West Two sites: (1) immature female January to March, female 29th April to 14th August, immature male 18th October to end of year; (2) immature 8th April to 21st June, two immature females 10th April, immature male occasional from 12th May to end of year, two 10th September.

Humberside One site: pair reared two young.

Huntingdonshire Two sites: (1) singles 18th May, 2nd and 6th June; (2) female on six dates 15th to 26th June.

Kent Two sites: (1) female 30th-31st May; (2) male and female on several dates in April, three females in May, single male and three females all June, male and three females on 4th July, three males and one female on 25th July.

Lincolnshire/South Humberside One site: pair possibly bred, two juveniles/immatures present July to September.

Norfolk Twelve sites: (1)-(12) 14 males and 19 females nested or attempted nesting, rearing 42 young to flying stage.

Perthshire One site: one 13th and 14th May.

Suffolk Six sites: (1) two males and three females reared six young; (2) pair reared three young; (3) three nests produced two, three and five young; (4) pair present throughout breeding season; (5) pair present 13th May only; (6) hunting female and juvenile 26th and 27th June.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Total sites	4	4	8	11	14	12	19	32	22	32
Sites with successful nests	4	4	3	6	9	9	8	11	10	12
Breeding males	4	5	5	13	15	15	24	21	18	20
Breeding females	6	6	7	13	16	16	26	23	22	24
Nests	5	6	7	11	15	15	15	22	20	24
Successful nests	5	4	5	9	13	12	12	14	16	24
Young reared	16	10	18	25	44	34	39	40	49	63

The steady increase in the breeding population, coupled with good breeding success, must gratify the conservation bodies concerned.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Seven sites: 3-8 pairs breeding, at least four young reared.

Derbyshire One site: immature male present 10th June to mid-August.

Huntingdonshire One site: female on three dates in July and August.

Kent One site: adult female on 18th and 25th May, male in June.

Norfolk One site: male and two females reared four flying young.

Suffolk One site: 'ring-tail' carrying food on 12th July.

County D One site: one pair bred successfully (number of young not reported).

County M One site: female seen 28th July, unconfirmed reports of more than one bird.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	5	3	3	4	2	7	4	8	8	7
Pairs proved breeding	2	0	0	3	1	2	2	2	2	3
Pairs possibly breeding	5	3	3	5	2	7	4	8	9	8
Young reared (minimum)	0	0	0	6	0	3	7	4	4	4

The situation seems to be stable, with the potential for a small increase in the breeding population. Larger modern fields may help the species, but the early harvesting of silage and hay may well hinder successful breeding.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

39 sites: 23-41 pairs.

Carmarthenshire One site: one pair bred successfully.

Cheshire One site: several sightings in spring and autumn, but no evidence of attempted breeding.

Cumbria Three sites: (1) male, March to May; (2) male on 15th May; (3) male on several dates in June.

Gwent One site: immature on 31st August.

Lancashire Four sites: (1) six records of singles in April and one on 13th June; (2) pair seen displaying in spring; (3) one, possibly two, present in May; (4) evidence of nesting, and pair with one juvenile in August.

Pembrokeshire One site: female on 21st March and pair displaying in late April.

Somerset Two sites: (1) pair on 16th May; (2) single on 23rd April.

Staffordshire One site: one pair reared young.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) male on several occasions in June; (2) pair, said to be nesting.

County C One site: four pairs said to have reared young.

County D Eight sites: (1) female incubating clutch of two eggs, deserted; (2) clutch of four eggs, from which three young fledged; (3) clutch of four eggs, from which two young fledged; (4) two or three nests built and lined, but not used, female found dead later; (5) pair present, but no evidence of nesting; (6) female incubating, but eggs stolen in May; (7) clutch of four eggs, from which two young fledged; (8) clutch of four eggs, from which two young fledged.

County G Two sites: (1) pair reared three young, flying 14th July; (2) pair built new nest, but no eggs laid.

County Q One site: clutch of three eggs, three young fledged.

County W Ten sites: (1) at least one bird present, 1981 nest repaired, but probably not used; (2) clutch of four eggs all hatched, one young died, three young stolen; (3) pair built up nest, but female died, male moved and remated, new female incubating by mid-May, but eggs stolen; (4) pair built and deserted twice, but laid clutch of four eggs in third nest and reared three young; (5) clutch of four eggs stolen; (6) nest from previous year repaired, but not used; (7) eggs stolen during incubation; (8) female laid twice, first clutch deserted, second clutch (in replacement nest) stolen; (9) pair displaying in April, but nest destroyed by person(s) unknown; (10) no evidence of nesting, but female carrying food in late June.

County Y One site: pair reported to have reared young.

County II One site: one, possibly two, birds summered.

1980 County D Eight sites: (1) pair hatched young, which were subsequently stolen; (2) birds present; (3) clutch of four eggs deserted, female believed shot; (4) brood of four reared; (5) clutch of four eggs, deserted; (6) clutch of four eggs, from which two young reared; (7) clutch of four eggs, from which three young reared; (8) eggs apparently stolen.

1980 County W Seven sites: (1) pair had part-completed nest which was not used; (2) eggs, laid in refurbished Sparrowhawk nest, stolen; (3) partly incubated eggs stolen; (4) clutch of two eggs stolen, replacement clutch of two eggs laid and two young fledged; (5) first clutch believed taken, repeat clutch of one successfully incubated, but the young was taken by a falconer; (6) nest built, but no eggs laid; (7) clutch of four eggs, from which two young reared.

1981 County D Eight sites: (1) new nest apparently not used; (2) clutch of three eggs stolen; (3) eggs laid but stolen; details of a repeat nest not known; (4) clutch of four eggs eventually deserted due to heavy snow; (5) female sitting, but eggs stolen; (6) clutch of three eggs stolen; (7) nest found at end of season, outcome unknown; (8) pair present, but no nest located.

1981 Cheshire One site: nest robbed of large young.

1981 County JJ One site: one bird, believed immature male, on 21st April.

1981 County P Six sites: (1) clutch of three eggs stolen; (2) clutch of four eggs, from which two young fledged; (3) partly incubated eggs stolen; (4) clutch of five eggs stolen; (5) clutch of two eggs stolen, replacement clutch successfully incubated in another nest, but young later stolen; (6) clutch of three eggs deserted after a period of bad weather.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Counties	6	10	14	10	15	18	20	20	25	16
Sites	12	20	32	28	33	37	36	41	48	39
Pairs proved breeding	6	9	5	12	15	14	21	17	14	23
Pairs possibly breeding	12	21	34	28	37	40	43	47	49	41

Detailed and very time-consuming checking of nests under licence reveals a truly shameful degree of persecution. The circumstances suggest that gamekeepers and irresponsible people involved with illegal trade in birds of prey for falconry or keeping in captivity are chiefly implicated. But for their activities, there seems little doubt that the species could quickly colonise most suitable sites in the country.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

30 sites: 27 pairs reared a total of 45 young; four, possibly five, clutches stolen by egg-collectors.

Inverness-shire Loch Garten: pair reared two young from three eggs.

Perthshire Loch of Lowes: pair reared three young.

Elsewhere in Scotland 28 pairs: 25 laid eggs and 19 bred successfully, rearing 40 young. Known broods fledging: nine of 3, three of 2, and seven of 1.

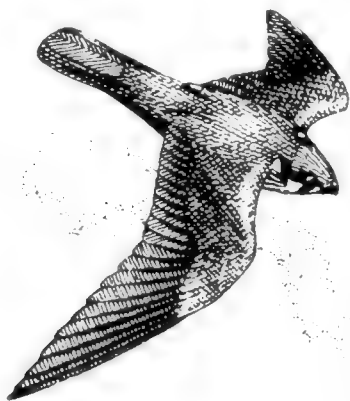


	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Pairs	16	14	14	14	20	22	25	25	25	30
Successful pairs	10	10	7	10	7	11	16	19	20	21
Young reared	21	20	16	20	13	19	30	41	42	45

The build-up in numbers continues, but, as with the Goshawk, it is cause for serious concern that nests are still being robbed.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

202 sites: 97-203 pairs breeding.



NA

Avon Four sites: (1) one pair probably breeding, adults seen carrying food July/August; (2) singles on 20th June, 24th July and 20th August; (3) one on 31st July; (4) singles on 3rd July and 14th August.

Bedfordshire Four sites: (1) pair raised two young; (2) pair, female seen on old nest; (3) singles present on several dates to 29th July; displaying pair on 1st May; (4) one or two seen on several dates from 22nd April to 8th September.

Berkshire Five sites: (1) one on 4th July; (2) one on several dates to 31st July; (3) two seen on 28th May; (4) one on 29th May; (5) one in summer.

Buckinghamshire 13 sites: (1)-(13) evidence indicative of successful breeding in five or six sites, pairs present at two localities (16th May to 7th June and July to August), sightings late May to early July in five other localities.

Cambridgeshire Three sites: (1) pair nested; (2) three sightings during June; (3) one on 28th June.

Cheshire Four sites: (1) one on 1st June; (2) two on 29th July; (3) one preying on Swallows *Hirundo rustica* at roost for two weeks in late July and early August; (4) one at Swallow roost on 8th September.

Derbyshire One site: seen in each month from May to September, three together in late August, breeding thought probable.

Dorset 15 sites: (1)-(15) 15 pairs, of which 12 reared a total of about 20 young; one, possibly two nests failed.

Essex One site: one pair reared three young.

Gloucestershire Two sites: (1) pair fledged one, possibly two young; (2) breeding suspected. The species is said to be under-recorded in the county.

Hampshire 48-49 sites: (1)-(49) 32 pairs bred in the county; an additional 16-17 sites were frequented by Hobbies on dates indicative of possible breeding; known broods fledging from nests in northeast: one of 3, three of 2 and one of 1.

Hertfordshire Ten sites: (1) pair bred, two juveniles seen 25th August; (2) pair with three young in nest in July; (3) pair from 7th May to 3rd June, with at least one juvenile on 29th August; (4) single on 11th May and family party of four on 4th September; (5) singles on 2nd and 3rd May and 10th August to 21st September, with adult and immature present on 15th September; (6) single on 30th May; (7) single on 10th June; (8) single on 27th June; (9) single on 3rd July; (10) single, calling anxiously, on 1st August.

Huntingdonshire Five sites: (1) one pair, family party seen on several occasions in August and September; (2) pair displaying on 15th June; (3) male chasing Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* on 7th June; (4) two or three on 16th July, including one juvenile; (5) pair fledged two young about 14th August.

Kent Seven sites: (1) one, possibly immature, on 13th June; (2) one on 13th June; (3) singles on 30th June and 22nd July; (4) one on 20th June; (5) one 25th August; (6) pair reared two young; (7) two singles, one in June and one in July.

Leicestershire Three sites: (1) pair, three immatures observed 14th August; (2) pair fledged three juveniles on 17th August; (3) adult feeding well grown young on 22nd August.

Northamptonshire 14 sites: (1) pair fledged three young; (2)-(3) pairs fledged two or three young; (4) adult 'teaching' juveniles on 16th August; (5) family party of two adults and two juveniles on 4th September in area where Hobbies seen all summer; (6) pair displaying during 3rd May to 8th May, three in August and September; (7)-(14) regular sightings during

breeding season in eight other areas, but some could have been of hunting birds from other breeding sites.

Nottinghamshire Perhaps six sites, in three or four of which Hobbies were regularly present, but no evidence of breeding.

Oxfordshire 11-20 sites: breeding proved at seven sites and possibly at two others; casual sightings suggest an Oxfordshire population double that number.

Somerset 16 sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) adult on 4th June and juvenile on 25th August; (3)-(11) singles on single dates between 3rd June and 9th August; (12) singles on 14th May, 11th June and 30th August; (13) numerous reports of singles, with pair displaying 9th May; (14) singles on 6th May and 18th June; (15) singles on 22nd and 29th August; (16) singles during 29th August to 5th September.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) regular sightings between 16th May and 11th June; (2) pair said to have reared four young, a juvenile with crude jesses found in the area was thought to have been taken from this nest.

Surrey 11 sites: (1) two pairs fledged three and two young respectively; (2) pair fledged three young; (3)-(5) single pairs each had nests with three young and fledged at least two; (6) pair fledged two young; (7) pair with three young from which at least one fledged; (8) pair with two young, at least one fledging; (9)-(10) pairs fledged at least one young; (11) nest, probably two young fledged; (12) very late nest, probably one young fledged; (13) nest with clutch of two eggs failed, four adults seen at this site on one occasion and could have represented two breeding pairs; (14) one seen on several occasions in traditional site.

Warwickshire One site: the adults occupied the site, but left prematurely and are presumed to have failed to breed.

Wiltshire 16 sites: (1)-(3) pairs reared two young each; (4) pair hatched young, but outcome unknown; (5)-(9) pairs present throughout breeding season, probably bred; (10)-(13) pairs possibly bred; (14)-(16) singles present during breeding season, but no evidence of breeding.

Worcestershire One site: pair bred successfully.

1981 Cheshire Three sites: (1)-(3) singles on 25th April, 12th July and 31st July, respectively.

1981 Northamptonshire Six sites: (1) eggs being incubated, but deserted, probably due to tree-felling; (2)-(6) breeding suspected due to the volume of sightings, birds seen carrying prey, and presence of family parties.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Pairs proved breeding	24	47	38	59	51	70	80	64	51	97
Pairs possibly breeding	65	96	133	143	119	156	132	155	160	203
Young reared (minimum)	24	51	42	69	78	96	72	86	89	63

No reports were received from Cornwall, Devon and Sussex, in which counties there are generally thought to be important breeding populations of this species. Even without them, we are moving slowly towards a more realistic estimate of the total population. We particularly appreciate the detailed information which some observers have been able to supply.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Two sites: 0-4 breeding pairs.

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) single singing during 24th to 26th April, 27th to 31st May, 5th and 26th July, immature seen 4th and 5th September; (2) two singing during May and June, three during 28th May and 1st June, one (probably juvenile) seen 3rd September.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	0	4	0	2	4	6	4	3	4	2
Singing males	0	5	0	2	7	6	8	4	9	4

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Nine sites: successful breeding at seven sites, 190+ pairs rearing 150+ young.

Essex One site: adults, not counted, present all summer; two or three young in June.

Lancashire One site: one on 12th and 13th May, calling agitatedly.

Norfolk Three sites: (1) one pair reared three young; (2) one pair reared one young; (3) 26 pairs reared 55 young.

Suffolk Three sites: (1) 110 pairs reared 41 young; (2) 49 pairs reared 47 young; (3) two pairs bred, but success not known.

County C One site: two on 8th May and 12th June.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Breeding sites	4	4	6	5	6	3	3	5	5	9
Breeding pairs (minimum)	149	125	158	151	146	145	147	168	201	190
Young reared (minimum)	115	64	142	68	14	92	99	101	155	150

The number of sites was the highest ever. Since, at present, the breeding success tends to be greater away from the main site, it may augur well for the population provided that disturbance, from whatever source, can be kept to a minimum at the new sites.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

44-46 sites: 8-67 pairs breeding.

Berkshire Four sites: (1) one or more calling on 18th May; (2) one or two on 14th April, 18th May and 18th September; (3)(4) present in summer, no indication of numbers.

Cambridgeshire Ten to 12 sites: calling individuals at each detected during nocturnal survey.

Dorset Two sites: (1)(2) single pairs bred.

Essex One site: three adults present for most of summer.

Hertfordshire Three sites: (1) pair on 25th April, with singles on 1st and 4th May; (2) pair from 15th April, with three on 14th May; (3) one or two calling.

Norfolk Two sites: (1) three pairs; (2) 14 pairs. The recorder warns that this information gives a falsely pessimistic picture of the Stone-curlew's status and numbers in Norfolk.

Oxfordshire One site: one or two pairs present all season, breeding behaviour seen, but no nest or young located.

Suffolk Eight sites: (1) present; (2) pair present; (3) at least four pairs; (4)(5) single pairs; (6)(7) two pairs at each; (8) three pairs. Part of the county was described as 'grossly under-recorded'.

Wiltshire 13 sites: (1)(2) pairs each raised two young; (3)(4) pairs each raised one young; (5) young present; (6) agitated adults, suggesting that young were present; (7)-(12) single pairs present; (13) one unmated male present early in the season.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Pairs proved breeding	26	28	47	16	4	20	34	8	10	8
Pairs possibly breeding	90	67	72	109	27	34	81	45	53	67

The behaviour of the Stone-curlew is such that its status can not be determined reliably by random observations. The most valuable results are achieved, as for example in Wiltshire, when observer(s) commit themselves to a special study.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

One site: singles only.

Kent One site: singles on 26th May and 18th June.

At present, it seems likely that the breeding record in 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 28) was an isolated event rather than part of a process of recolonisation.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Of the three report forms submitted, only one related to Scotland. Until more information is received, the Panel is not in a position to make meaningful comments about this species. We hope to be able to publish a statement in the next report.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Three sites: one pair proved breeding.

County B Two sites: (1) two adults displaying from 14th May onwards, four young hatched 1st July; (2) one, considered to be migrant, 3rd July.

County E One site: one displaying 16th May to 11th June, no proof of nesting.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	1	2	1	2	3	3	1	5	1	3
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	1
Pairs possibly breeding	2	3	2	4	5	6	6	6	1	3

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One site: one pair bred.

Scotland One site: nest with four eggs on 24th June, one chick seen in July, possibly a second nesting attempt.

With, apparently, still only one breeding pair, the species remains highly vulnerable as a British breeding bird.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

13 sites: 1-23 females breeding.

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) 87 males, many in breeding plumage, and 34 females on 20th April, declining rapidly to three males and one female by 18th May; (2) four males on 19th May.

Essex One site: 12 engaged in communal display on 27th April, not seen subsequently.

Huntingdonshire One site: two females in early May, believed to be non-breeders.

Lancashire Four sites: (1) clutch of four eggs, of which two hatched; (2) 19 in breeding plumage on 9th May, only one by 27th May; (3) up to five males and three females present, lek behaviour and copulation observed; (4) present mid May to mid June with a maximum of six males and three females.

Lincolnshire/South Humberside Two sites: 23 present on 24th April with seven males lekking; (2) single females on 15th and 18th May, and 4th and 8th June: two different birds.

Norfolk One site: lek of ten or more males and four females.

County F Two sites: (1) present all May with a maximum of 21, occasional in June; (2) present all May and June.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	2	2	5	6	6	4	12	10	10	13
Nests	0	2	2	4	0	0	3	3	0	1
Max. no. females breeding	8	12	27	17	16	4	22	13	13	23

In lekking species, breeding is often difficult to prove. The table (above) shows a steady trend towards more sites, and it is possible that there are now several nests annually.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

13 sites: 58-69 breeding pairs.

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) 25 pairs, 17 of them with young, on 18th May; (2) seven pairs and two single birds on 19th May.

Humberside One site: one pair summered, and up to five seen in early autumn.

Lancashire One site: one on 31st May rose to a passing Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* as if on territory.

Norfolk One site: 20 pairs, 15 with young.

Somerset One site: seven present and at least one pair nested.

Suffolk Three sites: (1) pair bred; (2) two pairs bred; (3) pair holding territory in spring, site not visited later.

Shetland One site: pair reared two young.

County I Three sites: (1) single seen 30th April, behaviour suggestive of breeding; (2) one displaying in April, field subsequently ploughed; (3) perhaps 40 summered, including three pairs displaying, at least one nest, but destroyed by predator before hatching.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	9	12	10	13	11	13	13	11	5	13
Pairs proved breeding	55	51	63	72	37	50	39	52	22	38
Pairs possibly breeding	61	58	71	87	70	68	64	77	26	69

The year 1981 was singularly poor for this species and, as the table shows, the improvement in 1982 represented no more than a return towards what might be regarded as normal.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Four sites: three pairs bred.

Caithness One site: adult in site suitable for breeding on 27th May.

Inverness-shire One site: three nests, brood of four seen on 10th June and brood of one on 30th June.

Ross-shire One site: adult in suitable locality.

Scotland, West Central One site: one singing during 9th to 26th June.

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	5	3	4	5	3	4	7	3	4	1	4
Pairs proved breeding	5	0	1	2	1	2	4	2	7	1	3
Pairs possibly breeding	8	3	5	6	3	5	10	4	12	1	6

A better year, in which some of the 'possibles' might be thought 'probable'.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

One site; one pair.

County B One site: male from 24th May, a pair in June to 7th July, no proof of nesting, but rumours of egg-collectors.

No reports were received from the Western Isles or from Shetland, but will be included in the next report, if available.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Two sites: two pairs attempted breeding.

Hampshire One site: eggs laid, but washed out by high tide.

County B One site: one pair attempted to breed, but failed; second pair present on 2nd June.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	5	4	2
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	3	2
Max. no. pairs or singles	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	5	6	3

Colonisation is unlikely to prosper until the birds start to breed here successfully.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

Three sites, but no suggestion of breeding.

Essex Three sites: (1) up to four present all summer; (2) three on 6th June; (3) the species was present most of the summer.

With successful colonies in the Netherlands, and the increasing frequency with which the species occurs in the Irish Sea, it would seem to be only a matter of time before the Little Gull becomes an established breeder in Britain.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

One site: three females, two of them laying single, unfertilised eggs.

Shetland One site: on Fetlar, three females throughout the summer and four on 26th May, two of them laying single unfertilised eggs; no males.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Nine sites: 0-10 pairs breeding.

Huntingdonshire One site: one singing for 15-20 minutes on 12th April.

Northamptonshire One site: one singing for at least 20 minutes on 11th April.

Perthshire One site: one, probably two, singing in wood on 27th June.

County D One site: one singing during 7th to 26th May.

County E Five sites: (1) one singing on 30th May; (2) one singing on 26th April; (3) one singing during 9th May to 14th June; (4) singles on 30th May, 1st to 4th June and 2nd July; may have nested locally; (5) one seen during 13th to 16th June.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	3	6	10	7	17	22	7	11	2	9
Pairs proved breeding	2	1	3	1	7	4	1	1	0	0
Pairs possibly breeding	3	6	10	7	19	23	9	14	2	10

A rather more promising year than 1981, but with no proof of breeding. The English birds seem likely to have been on passage, but if pairing occurs soon after arrival, they do become silent and secretive almost at once.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Seven sites: 2-7 pairs breeding.

Cumbria One site: single on 3rd May.

Inverness-shire Two sites: (1) pair feeding four young about five days old on 12th July; (2) two adults on 22nd July, but no suggestion of breeding.

Shetland One site: pair with five eggs on 8th July, failed.

Sutherland Two sites: (1) agitated adult on 6th May; (2) adult on 20th July.

Yorkshire, West One site: adult feeding with flock of Mistle Thrushes *T. viscivorus* on 15th July, one adult and five juveniles feeding with Mistle Thrushes on 16th July.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	3	8	10	11	6	3	6	5	6	7
Pairs proved breeding	2	3	2	3	4	1	1	1	0	2
Pairs possibly breeding	3	7	10	12	6	4	6	5	6	7

Whilst breeding remains sporadic, the species cannot yet be thought of as well-established as a British breeding bird.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

42 sites: 30-62 pairs breeding.

Inverness-shire 21 sites: (1)-(21) 12 pairs proved breeding, and further 16 records of singing males.

Kent One site: present in July and August, possibly breeding.

Ross-shire Five sites: (1) two or three pairs in song from 17th April; (2) pair feeding young on 13th June; (3)-(5) one or two singing at each in May and, in one site, in June.

Shetland One site: pair reared six young.

Sutherland 14 sites: (1)-(14) 16 pairs reared young, and six other singing males.

1981 Inverness-shire Two sites: (1) three nests, with five, six and six young reared respectively, and at least four other pairs or singing males; (2) one nest, successful at second attempt.

1973 Lanarkshire One site: nest found containing four eggs, outcome not known.

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	?	12	28	25	10	10	12	6	18	6	42
Pairs proved breeding	12	5	4	13	3	2	3	2	7	4	30
Pairs possibly breeding	42	13	28	53	15	16	17	9	32	11	62

A much better year than 1981, but the improved figures arise largely from detailed fieldwork by a small number of observers. The number of proved breeding records was the highest in the Panel's history.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

63 sites: 29-202 pairs breeding.

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) three singing, and four juveniles ringed between 1st July and 25th September; (2) one singing occasionally during the summer.

Cornwall Six sites: (1) male and two females, one nest with broods of two and three, second nest with brood of three; (2) pair bred, possibly second pair; (3) male present from 24th May to at least 2nd July; (4)-(6) maximum of three males, in April.

Devon Nine sites: (1) one singing during 3rd January to 22nd April; (2) one singing during February to December, but two heard during May; (3) one singing throughout the year; (4) up to 30 singing in April, with an estimated 20-25 breeding pairs; (5) three singing in January, two in February and May, one in June and one from September to November; (6) three singing on 28th February and 10th April, two singing on 24th April; (7) two singing from 15th April into May, one singing October; (8) two singing on 25th April, 7th and 25th May; (9) one singing in late May and June.

Dorset Seven sites: (1)-(7) nine, five, two, one, two, four and one males, respectively; one pair reported to have bred, but the figure likely to have been much higher.

Essex Two sites: (1) pair present from 21st April onwards; (2) male from 6th May onwards.

Hampshire Ten sites: (1) nine singing; (2) male on 7th June; (3) male April to May; (4) male in April; (5) male on 3rd May; (6) male during 17th April to 6th June; (7) male present, juvenile ringed 8th July; (8) one in mid June; (9) three males throughout the summer; (10) three males, with one pair proved breeding.

Hertfordshire Two sites: (1) male holding territory from 19th May to 7th July; (2) one singing 31st May. The species reported to be almost wiped out in the county by the hard winter of 1981/82.

Isle of Wight Two sites: (1) one heard on 21st February in a previously occupied site; (2) one heard on 8th February and 1st October.

Kent Five sites: (1)-(3) 45 singing males, with two pairs with young out of the nest at the time of the survey; (4) one or two singing males on five dates between 10th May and 30th June; (5) two singing males throughout April and May, then one until 26th June. A decline between 1980 and 1981, and a more pronounced one between 1981 and 1982 considered real rather than the result of poorer coverage.

Norfolk Eight sites: (1)-(3) single singing birds; (4)-(6) two singing birds at each; (7) three singing; (8) 12-14 singing.

Somerset Three sites: (1) two pairs present, the males singing from April to December; (2) pair with newly fledged young on 25th May, the first proved breeding for the county; (3) female present from 10th July to end of year.

Suffolk Eight sites: (1)-(5) single singing birds; (6) five singing; (7) six singing; (8) seven singing.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Counties	2	3	3	8	10	11	14	11	16	12
Sites (excluding Kent)	1	3	8	14	32	41	33	50	59	58
Pairs proved breeding	1	5	8	8	13	30	46	19	56	29
Pairs possibly breeding	14	16	75	80	153	174	163	198	162	202

Although there was some decline, the species appears to have survived the cold period of the 1981/82 winter rather well, and the number of 'possibles' was the highest yet recorded.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

11 sites: 0-18 pairs breeding.

Cleveland One site: one during 21st to 28th May, brief attempt at mating with Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* seen on 28th May.

Cumbria One site: bird singing on many dates between 6th April and 17th June.

Dorset One site: two pairs probably bred.

Kent Two sites: (1) two singing from 13th and 15th April to 2nd July; (2) one or two singing 15th to 27th April and one on 3rd July. A known egg-collector was found in the reeds.

Norfolk Four sites: (1) six pairs; (2)-(4) one singing at each.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) song heard from 25th April to 6th May; (2) pair present and thought to have bred.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	4	5	3	8	13	15	15	14	8	11
Pairs proved breeding	0	1	1	0	3	4	6	2	5	0
Pairs possibly breeding	13	8	3	9	26	28	30	29	15	18

If the two northern birds represent ‘overshoot’ it is curious that there were no reports from counties peripheral to the main breeding areas. It is doubtful whether any significance should be attached at this stage to the absence of proved breeding records.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*
26 sites: 2-74 pairs breeding.



Dorset Two sites: (1) male from 18th May to 24th July; (2) male from 4th to 30th June.
Gloucestershire Four sites: (1)-(2) singles singing; (3) pair reared at least one young; (4) pair present, with two singing birds on one day; the most records for the county since 1974.
Kent One or two sites: (1) singing bird on 30th and 31st May; (2) an adult feeding juveniles on 31st July was thought to be of this species, one adult was present in the area on 1st August, a nest, not found until January 1983, was shown to an expert on the species and judged to be most likely that of a Marsh Warbler.
Worcestershire 18 sites: (1)-(18) 45 pairs probably bred, with a further 20 possibles.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	9	6	3	5	6	15	15	8	3	8
Pairs proved breeding	5	0	0	0	2	4	1	2	0	2
Pairs possibly breeding	15	7	5	5	11	15	23	12	3	9

The figures in the table (above) omit the Worcestershire records. If they are included, the sites increase to 26 and the possible breeding pairs to 74. It is evident that much careful fieldwork lies behind the valuable Worcestershire status survey. Whilst there are no signs of an increase, there is equally no evidence of a steady decline.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

19 sites (counting the New Forest as one): 8-312 pairs breeding.
Cornwall Six sites: (1)-(4) total of four, possibly five, pairs bred, single juveniles seen July to November; (5) one singing 31st May; (6) three pairs bred, adults carrying food.
Devon Two sites: (1) pair in late May; (2) one singing on 14th April, female and second singing male nearby on 15th and 16th April.
Dorset Two sites: (1)(2) total of 28 pairs, compared with 46 in 1981.
Hampshire Two sites: (1) 56 pairs or singing males in three main areas, extrapolated to give a total New Forest population of about 250 pairs, the severe weather of the 1981/82 winter thought to have had little effect on the population here; (2) three pairs bred (elsewhere in this part of the county, the species was wiped out by the extensive snow cover in winter 1981/82).
Isle of Wight One site: one seen 15th May, 11th July, 20th August; this site has been occupied in most recent years and breeding is considered probable.
Surrey Six sites: (1) one male; (2) five pairs; (3) six or seven pairs; (4) two pairs and one additional male; (5) one pair; (6) five pairs. The majority of the Surrey pairs are thought to have bred successfully. In common with northeast Hampshire, a big reduction in the breeding population, estimated at 60%.

We are grateful for the detailed information supplied, which makes this report more complete than usual. The winter losses, although locally severe, do not appear to have affected the total population too badly.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

21 sites: 4-14 pairs breeding.

Avon One site: one singing from 2nd April to 11th June.

Buckinghamshire Three sites: (1) nine territorial males between 3rd April and 14th August, of which two reared young (this site held 14 males in 1981); (2) two singing, one during 5th to 9th May and one during 9th to 24th May; (3) one singing 1st June, but did not stay. Recorder commented that detailed mapping revealed that territories can be three or four times larger than those of Goldercrests *R. regulus*: this should be borne in mind when assessing numbers during any census.

Cambridgeshire One site: male during 4th and 11th June (one observer reported a pair).

Cheshire Two sites: (1) male on 8th May; (2) male on 14th May, two males (considered to be second and third individuals) on 15th May, and one male on 26th May (thus, three, possibly four, males singing within a linear distance of 3.5 km during 8th to 26th May, but note comment under Buckinghamshire).

Devon Three sites: (1) one during 20th February to 20th March, two on 21st March, male ringed on 30th May was retrapped on 13th June; (2) one singing on 30th April; (3) one singing on 27th March.

Essex One site: one singing during 14th March to 15th August, juvenile on 14th August.

Hampshire Four sites: (1) 12 'crests' singing Firecrest-like songs, three of which were definitely Firecrests, but two of which appeared to be Goldercrests *R. regulus* [we know of previous records of Firecrests mimicking the song of the Goldercrest (*Brit. Birds* 73: 477-478), but not vice versa. Ebs]; (2) male displaying to female Goldercrest in May and June, with possibly a second male; (3) one singing on 19th May; (4) male on 15th May, presumed a migrant.

Hertfordshire One site: two singing on boundary with Buckinghamshire.

Kent One site: eight singing and holding territory on various dates during May to July, one paired (figures lower than for 1981, partly reflecting poorer coverage, but population clearly reduced at main site).

Norfolk One site: male paired with female Goldercrest and carrying either nest material or food on 31st May.

Suffolk One site: two pairs, juveniles seen with one.

Worcestershire Two sites: (1) male singing during 28th March to 13th April, female present during 11th to 13th April; (2) male on 10th May. The recorder comments 'Colonisation seems likely before long'.

1981 Cheshire One site: one singing 17th April.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	5	13	32	15	12	7	25	30	35	21
Pairs proved breeding	2	1	4	4	2	1	9	7	15	4
Pairs possibly breeding	18	37	123	28	31	11	73	78	102	44

These are the lowest numbers since 1978, but it would be premature to see in them a significant decline. Fieldwork during the year emphasised the difficulties of accurate census work due to the large territories which the species holds, and re-emphasised the risks of hybridisation with Goldercrests, now well attested.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

12 sites: 3-21 pairs breeding.

Berkshire One site: one singing at dawn on 6th June, no subsequent record.

Gwent One site: female on 26th May and male on 25th June.

Hertfordshire Two sites: (1) one singing on 1st and 5th May; (2) male paid brief visit to garden, date not recorded.

Huntingdonshire One site: male holding territory from mid May to early June.

Kent Four sites: (1) green bird singing on 19th May; (2) green bird singing on 17th May and yellow one seen on 30th May; (3) one flying west on 19th May; (4) a believed male seen and a second bird heard on 2nd June.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) ten or more males present, two or three family parties seen; (2) pair present throughout summer.

County E One site: one pair bred.

1980 Hampshire One site: two, probably three, birds in trees, behaving in a manner suggestive of breeding.

1979 Huntingdonshire One site: male seen and heard on several dates between May and July.

1980 Huntingdonshire One site: male seen and heard on three dates between early April and mid June, possible female seen in late May.

1980 County F Two sites: (1) male seen and heard on 15th and 16th May; (2) one present on 8th June.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	2	3	4	11	16	14	17	17	13	12
Pairs proved breeding	1	2	2	7	6	7	3	2	4	3
Pairs possibly breeding	8	4	7	23	21	28	30	28	26	21

A surprisingly inconspicuous, cover-haunting species which can often remain in an area without showing itself. Breeding is generally hard to prove without risking disturbance, and the numbers published are certainly minima.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*
Eight sites: 5-8 pairs breeding (but no information from two key areas).

Suffolk Six sites: (1)-(6) single pairs, five known to have bred, one pair rearing two young and one three.

County A Two sites: (1) male on 17th May, not seen subsequently; (2) two seen on 1st June, but not subsequently.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Counties	8	8	7	5	13	11	10	5	5	2
Pairs proved breeding	30	30	51	3	48	13	14	23	10	5
Pairs possibly breeding	48	52	56	25	64	37	52	31	39	8

Unless there are unsubmitted records, 1982 was much the worst year on record. It should be noted, however, that there was a significant increase in 1977, after the last really poor year of 1976.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*
Ten sites: 2-10 pairs breeding.

Caithness One site: one singing during 8th to 22nd June.

Lothians One site: one singing on 9th May.

Ross-shire One site: male seen on many dates between 20th May and 20th June, calling frequently, but almost certainly unmated.

Scotland Six sites: (1) pair fledged five young; (2) female feeding three fledged young on 5th

July, no male seen, but young appeared to be pure-bred; (3) male singing on 22nd May; (4) pair seen on 27th May, but no song heard; (5) male flew over, calling, on 17th June; (6) one singing on 14th June.

County C One site: male seen on 1st June.

1981 Northamptonshire One site: recently fledged juvenile caught and ringed on 11th July, judged too young to have travelled far.

1981 Inverness-shire One site: moulting female caught on 27th July.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	1	0	0	0	2	2	3	3	2	10
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Pairs possibly breeding	1	0	0	0	3	2	4	4	2	10

A year showing the kind of success which has been anticipated for almost a decade.

Serin *Serinus serinus*

Five sites: 1-7 pairs breeding.

Devon Three sites: (1) singles on 12th May, when singing, and 9th June; (2) present from 22nd March to 22nd August, with three singing males and one female, one pair reared seven young in two broods; (3) female on 11th April and male on 20th June.

Hertfordshire One site: one singing on 26th May, not recorded on further visits.

Kent One site: male and female during 28th February to 7th March, female only during 8th to 23rd March, one, probably a male, on 23rd October, two on 8th November, female during 21st to 23rd November.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	1	3	5
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1
Pairs possibly breeding	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	1	6	7

Another satisfactory year, but colonisation remains more potential than actual.

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

One site: one pair breeding.

Highland Region One site: nest found on 23rd June, contained two eggs and two nestlings estimated to be two or three days old on 4th July (*Brit. Birds* 77: 133-135).

This is the first known breeding record of the Scarlet Rosefinch in Britain. It had, however, been anticipated for some years, since the species has been extending its range westwards in Scandinavia and eastern Europe.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*

One site: one in song in June.

Highland Region One site: a male, in song, on 14th June, not located on 16th June, and no sign of a female.

The bird was probably on passage, but colonisation by northern and eastern species is often preceded by a series of reports of birds seen in summer.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirius*

100 sites: 38-167 breeding pairs.

Buckinghamshire Four sites: (1)-(3) single singing males; (4) three singing males and a female carrying food.

Cornwall Seven sites: (1) male singing regularly; (2) male singing, pair seen with nesting material; (3) male seen twice; (4) singing male, seen only once; (5) a pair, the male singing regularly; (6) male seen; (7) three singing males.

Devon Present in 74 tetrads, which have been counted as sites in assessing the national total above. There were 35 pairs proved breeding, 99 probable and 130 possible. In 1974, there were 136 possibles, which suggests that, in this key county, the species may be more or less holding its own.

Hampshire Two sites: (1) pair, and possibly second female; (2) one singing male.

Somerset Approximately 12 sites, with one pair proved breeding, 11 probable and 19 possible.

Surrey One site: singing male, with two on 26th April, but no female or juveniles seen.

This species was the subject of a special survey, organised by Humphrey Sitters on behalf of the BTO, and all records have been assessed by him to ensure uniform treatment. Because of the survey, the coverage was probably more thorough than usual.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Twelve sites: 6-17 pairs breeding.

Argyll One site: three in possible habitat on 6th May (altitude lower than is typical of breeding birds, so may have been passage migrants).

Grampian Region Two sites: (1) three pairs on 26th May, four broods seen between 23rd June and early August; (2) at least one pair with young. Judged to be an about average year, with both first and second broods successful.

Inverness-shire Eight sites: (1) female with two juveniles and female with three juveniles joined two males around summit on 21st July; (2) pair on 21st July; (3) female on 21st July; (4) male, in song, on 29th July; (5) one in April, but none in late July; (6) pair, male in song, on 29th and 30th June; (7) female on 29th June; (8) male on 1st June, one or two males singing elsewhere on 6th July.

Ross-shire One site: one seen on 25th April.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Sites	5	7	13	1	5	3	13	4	2	12
Pairs proved breeding	6	2	2	4	4	3	7	4	2	6
Pairs possibly breeding	11	13	20	7	15	6	21	10	11	17

This report is based on a gratifying number of fairly detailed reports. There is no reason to suppose that the 1982 breeding distribution and numbers were anything but normal.

Unless there is a very special reason for doing otherwise, reports for the Panel should be sent via the relevant county recorder. Correspondence should be directed to the Panel's current secretary, Robert Spencer, at the address given below.

*Rare Breeding Birds Panel, Iredale Place Cottage, Loweswater, Cockermouth,
Cumbria CA13 0SU*

PhotoSpot

8. Grey Hypocolius



34. Male Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*. Bahrain, November/December 1982 (Mike Hill)

The Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus* is allied to waxwings (Bombycillidae), but recalls a shrike *Lanius*, and has a very restricted Middle-eastern distribution. It breeds in a narrow zone from northern Iraq, through southern Iran and into southern Pakistan, but not in Arabia as mapped by Harrison (1982, *An Atlas of the Birds of the Western Palearctic*). Outside the breeding season, from October to April, it may be seen in central and eastern Arabia, where it winters in varying numbers in quiet palm groves on the fringes of the least disturbed oases and villages. In some years, as in 1982/83, it crosses the Gulf in higher numbers, up to 120 having been recorded in some small areas of palm scrub. It can easily be overlooked, however, since individuals and parties are inclined to be secretive and hide for long periods in the middle of impenetrable palm scrub. Once located, however, it can be approached closely on occasions, the birds flicking and rotating their long tails in a shrike-like manner; but commonly it dives into thick cover and waits for danger to pass. Although not very



35. Male Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*, Saudi Arabia, November 1981 (G. Bundy)

36. Female Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*, Bahrain, November/December 1982
(Mike Hill)





37. Male Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*, Bahrain, November/December 1982 (Mike Hill)

vocal in its winter quarters, its contact notes sometimes betray its presence. Skulking birds may utter a whistling 'peeeooo', recalling Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, descending in pitch, with an occasional second note, 'p-uuu', which has an almost fluty quality. The flight notes uttered when small parties take to the air and circle a wintering area for up to about 20 minutes, seemingly without purpose, are weak 'quee' notes, sometimes vaguely disyllabic and with a reedy quality difficult to commit to paper. The flight is direct, with rapid, whirring wing-beats and occasional pauses while the wings are briefly closed.

It is long-tailed, rather short-winged, and about the size of Great Grey Shrike *L. excubitor*. The males are rather obvious. Females and immatures, however, are almost uniform creamy buff, with well-demarcated creamy throats and whitish wings; they have dark tips to their tawny, graduated tails, but are rather featureless, and often puzzle people seeing them for the first time.

GRAHAM BUNDY

Airwork Ltd, PO Box 18929, Salalah, Oman

Seventy-five years ago...

'A Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) was put up by my son on the Crumbles, Eastbourne, on December 21st, 1909. Though he had his gun with him he wisely forebore to shoot the bird, which I hope is still at large. H. P. MOLINEUX.' (*Brit. Birds* 3: 308, February 1910).

Product reports

Items included in this feature have been submitted by the manufacturers or their agents. The reviews are the personal opinions of the reviewers; they are not the result of technical tests, but are assessments made after use in appropriate conditions (e.g. in the field). Neither *British Birds* nor the individual reviewers can accept responsibility for any adverse consequences of opinions stated, and items are accepted for review on this understanding. We aim, however, to be helpful both to our readers and to the manufacturers of goods used by birdwatchers. EDS

Welt/Safe-Lock PT-3 Pneumatic Tripod

Height 86-208 cm (34-82 in); weight 2.7 kg (6 lb); obtainable from Welt/Safe-Lock Inc., Hialeah, Florida 33010, USA, price \$104.95.

This American-made tripod incorporates some excellent features which set it apart from all other tripods that I have used or seen. Each of the extending legs is controlled by a small (3-cm) lever placed at the top of the leg. Push the lever one way and the outer tube of the two-tube leg slides smoothly downwards. Push it back again and the leg locks firmly in position. Thus, simple movements with one hand, all at the same level, will set up the legs to the required height for each. Because it is the outer tube, ending in a stout rubber foot, which is in contact with the ground, no water, mud or sand can penetrate the legs when they are collapsed.

With the legs fully extended, the eyepiece of my telescope is already at a height of 133 cm (52.5 in), quite enough for some purposes and beautifully rigid. The central stem of the tripod is controlled by a good-sized knob and lifts the telescope to 174 cm (68.5 in), a very convenient standing height for all but the tallest people. For the latter, including my own 192 cm (6 ft 3½ in), a knurled ring releases an inner section which rises to an amazing 208 cm (82 in), enabling the would-be birdwatcher or photographer to stand on a wall or a boulder to get a better view! Obviously, at this full extension, there is movement in a wind, but less than with some other tripods which I have used; while, with just the main stem erected, the whole tripod is remarkably stable. The inner stem has an air-cushion effect (the 'Pneumatic' part of its name) which prevents it sliding down out of control under the weight of the telescope. Panning is smooth and steady, released by a knob, while two small twist-grip handles control fore-and-aft and side-to-side tilting. In practice, of course, the latter is rarely needed with a telescope, though useful with a camera.

The tripod is robustly made of aluminium, with a matt-black head, and hard plastic knobs and levers. The weight of 2.7 kg compares favourably with the *Slik Master D2* at 2.5 kg. There is, however, a penalty associated with having only two leg tubes, namely a collapsed length of 86 cm (34 in), although in several months' use I have found the ease and speed of setting up more than compensates for this one drawback. It is only when one no longer has to release or tighten six different knurled rings or catches spaced down the legs, and when the catches no longer live up to their name by hooking garments, fences or vegetation, that one really appreciates the boon of this tripod's simple extending mechanism. My one grumble concerns the screw attachment for a telescope or camera. Although supplied with a useful locking ring, the head of the attachment is rather small, and a

larger one would have been easier for cold or gloved fingers. On the other hand, once attached, my telescope and tripod tend to stay as one unit for days or weeks on end. At present, there is apparently no sales outlet for this tripod (and others by the same manufacturer) in Britain, though if enough interest was expressed no doubt this might be remedied, as has happened with some North American optical products (e.g. Bausch & Lomb/Bushnell telescopes and binoculars).

M. A. OGILVIE

Identification pitfalls and assessment problems*

8 Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

The Purple Heron is seldom seen away from large reed-beds and marshland vegetation where it spends much of the day concealed. It is, therefore, most frequently seen in flight, and then usually soon after dawn and shortly before dusk. As most species can appear dark-plumaged at these times, it is important that, without great emphasis on colour, a flying Purple Heron be clearly distinguished from possible confusion species: Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* and Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*.

38. Juvenile Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Kent, July 1981 (R. J. Chandler)



*This paper, like those earlier in the series (*Brit. Birds* 76: 26-28, 78-80, 129-130, 203-206, 304-305, 342-346; 77: 412-415), is a publication of the Rarities Committee, which is sponsored by Zeiss West Germany.

Compared with a Grey Heron, it is smaller, obviously shorter- and slimmer-winged, narrower-bodied, smaller-headed and both longer- and thinner-necked. As with Grey Heron, the neck is coiled in flight, but, unlike that species, its more prominent bulge protrudes well below the line of the breast and belly, and the base of the neck meets the breast at a sharp angle. Accentuating the snaky appearance of the head and neck, the bill is very slender, proportionately longer than that of Grey Heron, and tapers evenly to a sharp tip. Although Purple Heron is shorter-legged than Grey Heron, it is also shorter-tailed and possesses much larger feet due to its extremely long toes. In flight these features of Purple Heron combine to produce a greater projection of the legs beyond the tail than on the other species.

Compared with Bittern, Purple Heron is larger, longer- and slimmer-winged, narrower-bodied, proportionately smaller-headed and both longer- and thinner-necked. In flight, Bittern, like Grey Heron, lacks the angled, downwards-protruding, retracted neck of Purple Heron. A Bittern's bill is considerably shorter and proportionately thicker than that of Purple Heron, and its legs, tail and toes are shorter than those of the other species, combining to give Bittern less projection of the legs beyond the tail in flight.

The ageing terminology used here for Purple and Grey Heron follows *BWP I*: the nestling's down is followed by juvenile plumage, immature plumage being gradually acquired during the first autumn and winter and sub-adult plumage being acquired during the second autumn. A Purple Heron can reach adult plumage during its third autumn, whilst a Grey Heron can attain adult plumage during its fourth autumn, though individuals of both species retain traces of sub-adult plumage for longer.

The plumages of all three species are well described and illustrated in several books, including *BWP I* and *The Popular Handbook of British Birds*. In all three species, the sexes are alike, and there is little seasonal variation. The plumage and bare-part coloration differences between juveniles and adults are minimal in Bittern and fairly subtle in Grey Heron, but marked

39. Adult Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Kent, April 1981 (David M. Cottridge)





40. First-winter Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Netherlands, December 1973 (P. Munsterman)

in Purple Heron. Sub-adult and adult Purple Herons are basically dark grey and black, thus most confusable with a Grey Heron; and juvenile and immature Purple Herons are basically brown, thus most confusable with a Bittern. Given good views, however, all three species are readily identifiable on colour alone.

The following adult Purple Heron plumage characters separate that species from adult Grey Heron, whose equivalent characters follow in brackets: crown dark (white); neck chestnut, striped with black (greyish-white streaked with black); wing-coverts dark slate-grey, showing comparatively little contrast with the primaries and secondaries (pale powder grey, contrasting with black); area at base of primaries rich buff (white); underwing very dark (blue-grey); centre of breast and belly dark vinaceous (white); and undertail-coverts black (white). All these features, except the crown and, to a lesser extent, the wing-coverts, can also be used to separate adult Purple Heron from juvenile and immature Grey Heron. The crown, wing-coverts, primary-base and underwing points can be used to separate



41. Adult Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, France, July 1975 (*Pierre Petit*)



42. First-winter Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Kent, January 1983 (*R. J. Chandler*)

sub-adult Purple Heron from adult Grey Heron, and the latter two features can be used to separate sub-adult Purple Heron from juvenile and immature Grey Heron.

The following juvenile and immature Purple Heron plumage characters separate that species from Bittern, whose equivalent characters follow in brackets: bill yellow (yellow-green); mantle and scapulars brown, edged with tawny, but appearing fairly uniform (black boldly edged with buff); back, rump and uppertail-coverts dark grey (buff with dark spotting);



43. First-winter Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Kent, January 1983 (*R. J. Chandler*)



44. Adult Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Mallorca, April 1979 (*Brian Thomas*)

45. First-winter Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Romania, September 1979 (*Ľan Ševčík*)



46. Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*,
Cornwall, September 1981
(S. C. Hutchings)



primaries and secondaries uniform blackish (blackish barred across with buff); and legs and feet yellow (yellow-green).

The position is unfortunately complicated by the occasional occurrence of apparently melanistic Grey Herons which superficially resemble juvenile Purple Herons. Three instances have been published (*Brit. Birds* 70: 76, 345-346; 71: 416) and unpublished records include one photographed by R. F. Porter and another observed by D. J. Britton (*in litt.*). There is also a published account thought to refer to a hybrid Purple \times Grey Heron (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 88: 1-4).

Structurally, melanistic Grey Herons are invariably of normal size for the species, and thus larger than Purple Herons, though this may not be helpful if no other herons are available for comparison. In flight, they lack the large feet and bulging neck of Purple Herons. Some, however, exhibit minor structural differences from normal Grey Herons, perhaps due to poor feather condition associated with the apparent melanism. For example, the neck may be thinner and the flight heavier, on more bowed wings. Their plumage is variable, but characteristically is a dirty or oily brown, more uniform than on any age of Purple Heron, and lacking darker streaks on the head and neck. Bare-part colour is not exceptional for the species, but some individuals curiously combine the bright yellow bill of an adult, though with black upper edge and tip, with the complete, neatly demarcated dark cap of a juvenile. Such individuals may strongly recall Purple Heron, especially if the neck is sleek.

Melanistic Grey Herons are undoubtedly rarer in Britain than are Purple Herons, except perhaps in winter. Thus, the problem needs to be kept in perspective, but a poorly described brown heron with little supporting structural evidence, though most likely to be a Purple Heron, is perhaps best regarded as unproven.

A total of 423 Purple Herons has been accepted as having occurred in Britain and Ireland (up to the end of 1982), and the species is currently occurring at the rate of about 20 a year. Almost all have appeared during April to October, with a peak from late April to late May, and the great majority have been seen in England and Wales, mostly in the coastal counties from the Isles of Scilly to Norfolk.

I am grateful to D. J. Britton for supplying the paragraphs concerning melanistic Grey Herons.

PETER LANSDOWN

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Mystery photographs



47. Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Netherlands, January 1977 (Fritz Hautkamp)

98 It is late in the year and you are sitting alone in a hide overlooking an area of pools, reedbeds and small bushes. Suddenly, as if by magic, a large bird materialises at the edge of a nearby reedbed. The combination of large size, thick, pointed, dagger-like bill, long, thick neck, stocky body, short tail and medium-length, thick legs immediately identifies the bird as one of the herons.

The size and the plumage pattern of pale ground colour overlaid with dark markings indicate that the bird is either a Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* or an American Bittern *B. lentiginosus*. Of all the other herons, the only ones even vaguely similar are the buff-coloured Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, which, however, except for the lightly streaked immature, is unpatterned and, incidentally, is much smaller, and the occasionally confused, brown-



48. Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Netherlands, December 1977 (P. Munsterman)

coloured immature Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, which is quite dark and liberally sprinkled with white spots on its upperparts (not pale with dark markings), and is also smaller.

The time of year is right for both a cold-weather-dispersed Bittern and a vagrant American Bittern, and the habitat could suit either. On average, Bittern is the larger, with the greater wing-span, and American Bittern has the longer bill; but, in all three measurements, overlap occurs, and size and structure are of little use in separating the two species when an observer is confronted by a single bird. The well-known difference between Bittern's black flight feathers (thinly and irregularly barred paler) and American Bittern's unmarked, dark chocolate flight feathers is readily apparent only on a flying bird.

On such a fine view as this, the bill is perhaps the easiest point of difference to check quickly. Bittern possesses a plain-looking, pale (greeny-yellow) bill, with the culmen ridge darker in a thin line only near the tip; and American Bittern has a pale (dull yellow to pale straw) bill with a thick, contrasting dark brown line right down the culmen ridge and broadest towards the base.

Head pattern is the second major point of separation. Bittern has a contrasting black forehead and crown, clean-cut against a buff supercilium; a pale but dull green or blue gape which extends back to below the rear of the eye; buff sides to the head and neck, narrowly barred dark brown; and a dark moustachial stripe which fades gradually into the barring of the head and neck. American Bittern has a rich rusty brown forehead and crown, lacking in contrast with the lemon-white supercilium; a bright lemon gape, which is clean-cut both above and below against blackish, and broader and more conspicuous than the supercilium; uniform greyish-buff and grey-brown sides to the head and neck; and a broad, dark moustachial stripe, which is clean-cut against the uniformity of the sides of the head and neck.

A third important feature is the general upperparts pattern. Bittern has the mantle and scapulars tawny-buff, blotched with irregular black



49. American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*, Gwent, November 1981 (Nigel R. Jones)

markings, and the innerwing-coverts buff, strongly mottled and freckled with tawny and black. There is no real contrast between the scapulars and wing-coverts on adults and the wing-coverts are only slightly paler than the mantle and scapulars on first-winter individuals. American Bittern, however, has the mantle and scapulars dark brown, finely mottled and vermiculated with buff and black, itself a useful distinction from Bittern, and the inner-wing-coverts contrastingly lighter, being pale greyish-buff, finely vermiculated with brown.

The bird in the photograph displays no dark culmen ridge to the bill; a sharp-edged dark crown; no obvious pale gape-stripe from the bill to below the eye; barred sides to the head and neck; no clean contrast between this and the moustachial stripe; and wing-coverts no paler than the mantle and scapulars. Thus, the photograph (plate 20, repeated here as plate 47) shows a Bittern. The American Bittern in the accompanying photograph (plate 49) possesses the opposite characters.

PETER LANSDOWN

50. Mystery photograph 99. Identify the species. Answer next month



Points of view

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

12. The taking of bird specimens

A recent trip to Malaysia brought to my attention circumstances when birds are being killed by naturalists in Southeast Asia to provide specimens.

First, some American ornithologists require specimens (or good photographs) in order to accept a new record for the area, as they regard sight and ringing records as insufficient. Obviously, lesser studied areas, particularly species-rich ones, require great care with regard to identification. I feel, however, that the case can be overstated: where full descriptions are taken by experienced birdwatchers, specimens are surely not necessary.

Secondly, some ringing programmes use inexperienced operatives instructed to take specimens when they cannot identify birds. Whilst this is—debatably—preferable to ringing misidentified birds, it apparently sometimes leads to several specimens of a species being taken. I accept that experienced personnel are in short supply in such places, but perhaps descriptions could be taken, and the birds released unringed. This might mean that fewer birds would be processed in a project, but that would be preferable.

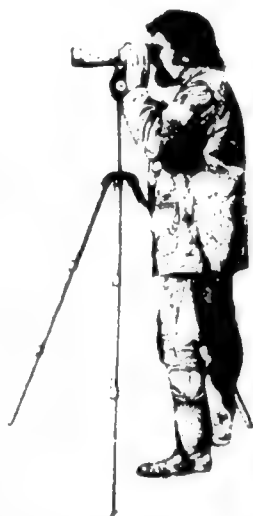
Finally, I came across an artist who took specimens to produce bird paintings. Perhaps this may be thought to be justifiable if local museums have no suitable skins. Even if the birdlife of an area is poorly known, however, shouldn't ornithologists always be rather more circumspect? I daresay that the numbers of birds being taken are not significant, but how can we be sure?

PHILIP PERRY

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Notes

Green-backed Heron in Humberside On 27th November 1982, together with other observers, including T. Bell and P. A. Bentley, we were searching for a Great White Egret *Egretta alba* that had been reported in the Thorngumbald area on the north side of the River Humber (*Brit. Birds* 76: 100 and 481). Having spent two hours scouring the area to no avail, we decided, fortuitously as it turned out, to make one last check in the Stone Creek area. We saw two observers (C. Featherstone and G. Featherstone) waving to us and thought that they had relocated the Great White Egret. It was with surprise that we learnt that they had just seen, albeit briefly, 'a small heron with a rufous neck'.



Not quite knowing what to make of it, we proceeded to the ditch where they had last seen the bird, whereupon it flew up and across in front of us at some 5 m range in late afternoon sunlight. We saw it for some 30 seconds or so in flight before it took cover again in a dense hawthorn-covered drainage ditch. At this stage, we considered the bird to have been a Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus*. We made an effort to summon other observers before dusk fell, and flushed the heron twice again before the light faded totally.

The following is a resumé of our notes taken at the time of these first sightings:

Very small heron, smaller than both Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* and Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*. Appeared 'tail-less' in flight. Very broad, rounded wings, with strong, deep beats. 'Jerky' flight. Exceptionally dark general appearance.

HEAD Dark 'cap' contrasted with lighter 'cheeks' and pale eye-ring. Faint paler line from bill to eye. Bill typical of genus, being long, 'dagger-like', and black in colour except for paler base, leading to short, pale moustachial stripe.

UPPERPARTS In flight, and only in certain

lights, showed very deep green sheen to uppersides of coverts and mantle. Primaries appeared much darker. Uniformly dark uppersides to rump and tail.

UNDERPARTS Most striking feature a rich rufous-brown on whole of neck, extending to top of breast and contrasting most markedly with white throat. Legs and feet orangey-yellow, (especially evident when bird flying directly away), protruding well beyond tail.

BEHAVIOUR Exceptionally wary and shy, not allowing close approach during initial observations.

These notes, all compiled on flight views, were sufficient for us to identify the bird in question as a Green-backed Heron of the North American race *B. s. virescens*. Its most similar relative is the African race *B. s. atricapillus*, which AGR had seen in southern Africa, but this lacks the rufous throat and breast of its North American counterpart. Indeed, there is no other similarly sized heron with a rufous neck.

The bird stayed in the area until 6th December and was reported on by several national newspapers, as well as becoming the foremost claimant to the title of 'most twitched bird of all time'.

This is the second record of Green-backed Heron for Britain and Ireland, the first having been over 50 years earlier—one shot near St Austell, Cornwall, in October 1889—and reinstates the species in Category A of the British and Irish list.

ANDREW G. ROSS and PETER T. BELL

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We have already published photographs of this bird by P. A. Doherty and G. P. Catley (*Brit. Birds* 76: plates 40 & 41; 77: plate 219) and drawings of it by Keith Colcombe (*Brit. Birds* 76: 480). EDS

Communal feeding by Western Reef Herons *BWP* (1: 288) states that the Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* feeds alone at all times of the year, isolated or in scattered groups spaced along the shore, with each individual maintaining a feeding territory. Since 1977, along the Arabian Gulf littoral, I have not infrequently seen single herons, but, especially where food in shore pools is abundant, up to 40 have been noted swarming around in shallow pools only 5 m wide. Concentrations of these herons in small creeks

and pools are sometimes reminiscent of vultures around a carcass, the birds jostling and wing-flapping in a growling swarm as they try to exploit a temporarily abundant food source. This species breeds on offshore islands from late April, and becomes really numerous on the mainland coasts only from August to April; feeding concentrations have been noted only outside the breeding season.

GRAHAM BUNDY

The Crest, Blythe Shute, Chale, Isle of Wight PO38 2HJ

Communal winter roosting by Imperial Eagles Communal roosting by Imperial Eagles *Aquila heliaca* is not mentioned in *BWP* (2: 225-233), which states that the species is solitary and little-known in its winter quarters. In eastern Saudi Arabia, Imperial Eagles are usually seen singly over the semi-desert plains in northern districts from November to March. Towards sunset, they congregate in one locality at the edge of the small village of Nariya (27° 30'N 47° 30'E), where they roost in a fenced-off compound lined with tamarisks *Tamarix* that houses two tall radio masts; the tamarisks grow in lines, extend for about 250m, and average about 15m in height. Up to 14 eagles have been counted at one time, but it is thought that this is an underestimate; at least 20 are considered regularly to use the compound for roosting. Up to four sub-adult Steppe Eagles *A. rapax* have also roosted at the same locality. Eagles sometimes pitch on the radio masts and perimeter fence on arrival (up to two hours before sunset), but mostly they seek the shelter of the tamarisks, with occasionally two in the same tree and up to eight in a space of about 50m. The maximum number of adult or near-adult Imperial Eagles seen at this locality is two, the remainder being pale first-winter examples. They usually remain in the roosting area for several hours after sunrise, unless disturbed. When departing, up to ten have been seen spiralling away at a time; they then radiate singly over the surrounding plains.

In February 1981, at Bharatpur, northern India, I located a roost where up to ten first-winter Imperial Eagles were present on three evenings. Up to six were also present on one mid afternoon, and four were still there at noon on the following day. This site was a low grassy bank about 100m long in flooded fields, and the eagles were usually hunched in the shade of low trees.

GRAHAM BUNDY

The Crest, Blythe Shute, Chale, Isle of Wight PO38 2HJ

Coot feeding by artificial light in urban area during hard weather The note by A. R. Lowe (*Brit. Birds* 75: 32-33; 77: 27) concerning hard-weather scavenging by Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* prompts me to record the following. At 00.20 GMT on 15th January 1982, in Clifton, Bristol, in air temperature below -10°C, I found a Coot *Fulica atra* attempting to feed in and beside a busy, snow-covered but unsalted road. It was using the illumination from orange-mercury-vapour lights and was apparently oblivious to cars passing at some speed within 1m. It was seen to pick up, but immediately discard, several small items, including cigarette ends and gravel. The Coot was finally flushed into a nearby garden by a dog-walker

and was last seen feeding on scraps beneath a tit-feeder. The nearest concentrations of Coots are 10km away at the Bristol reservoirs, which had frozen a few days previously. Two days earlier, K. E. Vinicombe had reported three Coots in the Clifton Gorge, itself a very unusual occurrence.

PETER J. HOPKIN

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Kestrel attempting to catch bat in mid air At about 15.45 GMT on 28th February 1982, at Kirk Loch, Lochmaben, Dumfriesshire, I saw a pipistrelle bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* flying over a grass field and an area of lochside rushes *Juncus*, apparently in search of insects. A Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* which had earlier been hovering over the rushes settled on the grass field, at which point the bat was flying about 2.5m above ground and was about 70m from the falcon. Suddenly, the Kestrel flew towards the pipistrelle at a height of 30-60cm; as it neared the bat, it rose sharply and, with talons extended, approached it from below. It missed capturing the bat, which fluttered downwards, flew into a beech tree and disappeared.

PAUL SHIMMINGS

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We have previously published notes on Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* chasing bats (*Brit. Birds* 68: 248; 77: 119-120). Eds

Skylarks and Yellowhammers roosting under snow At 22.00 GMT on 10th January 1982, at Digswell, Hertfordshire, my wife and I were returning home across a snow-covered field when we disturbed three small birds which, in the snow-reflected light, were seen to take flight. The field is an area of well-established grassland which, having been neither cut nor grazed since 1971, has developed some areas of medium herbage up to 60 cm high. At 120 m above sea level on top of one of the highest hills in central Hertfordshire, it is a particularly exposed site: uninterrupted views to the east and south exceed 11 km. The only significant protection is provided by a narrow belt of deciduous woodland along the western boundary. The snow cover varied from 30 cm to 38 cm, deeper where drifting had occurred, and, on the night of 13th/14th January, the temperature in my nearby summer house fell to -9°C (16°F). In view of the weather conditions and the situation of the site, the presence of small birds at night seemed remarkable. On the afternoon of 11th January, I returned and saw 11 or 12 Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* and seven Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella*, five of which were males, arrive in the field and, with little or no preliminary activity, enter holes or tunnels in the snow. Three tunnels were close enough together to permit simultaneous observation at close range; the occupants were two Skylarks, and a pair of Yellowhammers which entered one tunnel together. By the time that it was too dark to continue observations, no birds had emerged, and it seemed reasonable to deduce that they were roosting under the snow. On my next visit, on 13th January, seven Skylarks and two pairs of Yellowhammers arrived and entered tunnels in the snow; the same three tunnels were again occupied by two

Skylarks and a pair of Yellowhammers. This suggests some loyalty to roost sites under the snow, and an ability to survive intensely cold weather by such behaviour. On the evening of 15th January, a rapid thaw commenced. On the following evening, no Skylarks appeared and the only pair of Yellowhammers I saw apparently remained in the nearby woodland. Examination of the same three tunnels revealed ground-level cavities or chambers, all containing several droppings, formed in the snow, but within the base of clumps of dead herbage. The tunnels measured, respectively, 20.3 cm, 28 cm and 31.8 cm from the entrance to the rear of the chamber; they were, however, probably several centimetres longer when formed, as the effects of compacting and the partial thaw must be taken into account. The tunnels were angled at between 30° and 45° from the ground.

The observations raise a number of interesting questions. In particular, did the birds tunnel into the snow, or were the chambers established roost sites which had become snowed in and from which the tunnels were made as the birds emerged? Neither possibility can be excluded on the evidence available, as the snow was the result of a near-continuous fall which started during the night of 7th/8th January and finished at about 15.00 GMT on 9th. It might be expected that small birds could obtain some relative benefit, in terms of energy conservation, warmth and shelter, by roosting under snow during intensely cold weather. By so doing, however, they would appear to risk becoming trapped by further overnight falls of snow. T. W. GLADWIN

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Unusual calls at Pied Wagtail roost On 11th October 1981, in Staffordshire, I visited a roost of Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* in order to make some sound-recordings of the roosting calls. The roost site, situated in a reed-filled pool, has some willows *Salix* which the wagtails seemed to favour. I lined up my parabolic reflector on a bush containing up to 30 wagtails and proceeded to record. Through the head-phones I could hear, in addition to the usual wagtail calls, a crackling noise which I can only describe as like the crumpling of a piece of cellophane. Thinking this to be coming from my equipment, I removed my head-phones, but I could still hear the noise; it was present all the time, but at a low level. Every so often, there was a wave of increased activity. I can find no reference to this crackling noise in *British Birds*, *Bird Study* or *The Handbook*, although the late Rodney Jervis (*in litt.*) has also noted it. I sent a copy of my recording to Ron Kettle at the British Library of Wildlife Sounds (BLOWS). He informed me (*in litt.*) that BLOWS had a recording similar to mine made by John B. Fisher, who said that the crackling was due, as I had suspected, to mandible-clicking. Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any clear explanation for this noise, and more certain evidence of its origin would seem to be needed.

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Ron Kettle has confirmed that the recordings by David Emley, Rodney Jervis and John B. Fisher are all held at BLOWS (29 Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AS), and that readers are most welcome to listen to these and to any other recordings held by the library. Eds

Hovering as feeding strategy of Pied Wagtail On 20th June 1981, outside the campus library at the University of Exeter, Devon, I observed a male Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* feeding. After a period of heavy rain, a 'layer' of small-winged insects had gathered several centimetres above a deep, uncut lawn about 30 cm high. The wagtail hovered about 10 cm above the grass, snapping at these insects; after about five seconds, it would move 1 m or so and repeat the behaviour at another concentration of insects. It continued this for up to half a minute at a time. Presumably, the usual running and flycatching method of feeding could not be used because of the length of the grass; prolonged hovering was, therefore, adopted to exploit this food source.

DAVID A. COPE

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Dr N. B. Davies has commented as follows: 'I have never seen Pied Wagtails hovering so persistently as this. Flycatching is an energetically expensive way for a wagtail to feed and is normally used only for large flies, whereas picking and run-picking are used for smaller prey. Presumably, the very high concentration of insects in a small area made persistent hovering profitable in this case.' Eds

The Fieldfare as a prey species in East Sussex During the winters of 1980/81 and 1981/82, in the upper Medway valley and adjoining Ashdown Forest, Sussex, I was impressed by the frequency of discoveries, in a variety of habitats, of the plucked-feather remains of Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* compared with any other bird species. Most finds, at a known roost site of the species, seemed to indicate that the birds were taken either during the night or very early in the morning, implying predation by Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* and Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*: at Ashdown Forest, Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* cannot be excluded. Fieldfares were also suspected of having fallen prey to mammals during periods of severe frost, when many took to foraging among leaf litter in hedgerow bottoms.

PETER FRISTON

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Derek Goodwin has commented as follows: 'If Peter Friston is correct, it does seem that Fieldfares are more vulnerable in his area. The question of whether some or all predators prefer certain prey species or simply take those that are easiest to catch is of interest and would repay further study.' Eds

Nuthatch hovering Ian Ward's note on a Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* hovering around lime trees *Tilia* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 537) prompts the following. On 9th June 1982, at Ringstead Downs, Norfolk, I watched a pair of Nuthatches twirling to an excessive degree around the rolled-up leaves of an ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, sometimes hovering and sometimes sipping rapidly at the leaf ends like hummingbirds (Trochilidae). During the entire duration of my observations, they concentrated on the same tree, hovering tirelessly; mature oaks *Quercus*, wych elms *Ulmus glabra*, beeches *Fagus sylvatica* and pines *Pinus* only metres away were completely ignored. I subsequently examined several of the contorted leaves and discovered a number of white aphids, translucent eggs the size of a pin-head, and pale green 'hoppers': unfortunately, I was unable to identify these at the time. This food was also offered to two juvenile Nuthatches.

MARGARET CLARKE

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Announcements

'Young Ornithologists of the Year' The entrants for this year's competition, run by the Young Ornithologists' Club and sponsored by *British Birds*, had to submit their field notebooks for examination, and identify a set of difficult bird photographs published in the YOC magazine, *Bird Life*. The winners and runners-up were:

SENIOR SECTION (13-18 years)

- 1st Robert Fray (Oadby, Leicestershire)
- 2nd Moyra Wilson (Worcester)
- 3rd Paul Chapman (Carlisle, Cumbria)

INTERMEDIATE SECTION (10-12 years)

- 1st Helen Parr (Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk)
- 2nd Mark Eaton (Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire)

JUNIOR SECTION (up to 9 years)

- 1st Imogen Wade (Studley, Warwickshire)



Congratulations are due to the three winners, Robert Fray (14), Helen Parr (10) and Imogen Wade (9), who will all receive their prizes at a special award ceremony.

The two second-placed entrants, Moyra Wilson (14) and Mark Eaton (12), were both very close competitors with the winners in the senior and intermediate sections. It was pleasing to see the name Paul Chapman (13) appearing again: he won the junior section in both 1979 and 1980, and gained second place in the intermediate section last year. The clear winner of the junior section, Imogen Wade, continues an even more remarkable sequence: her sisters, Miranda and Rowena, were, respectively, placed first in the junior section in 1981 and second in the intermediate section in 1981 and 1982. The judges, Peter Holden and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, were also especially impressed by Helen Parr's work: although at the bottom of the age-range for the intermediate section, her entry was of a higher standard than many of those submitted for the senior section. A special Consolation Prize was awarded to Nick Rhodes (13) of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, whose artwork was of an exceedingly high standard.

British Birds is delighted to continue to sponsor this annual competition, aimed at encouraging young birdwatchers to approach their hobby with an enquiring mind and in a scientific manner. We hope that adult readers of *British Birds* will encourage young birdwatchers not only to join the YOC, but also to enter this competition.

'A Lighthouse Notebook' The author, Norman McCanch, writes of his experiences at various of Britain's lighthouses when he was employed by Trinity House, and the book is filled with his sketches and paintings of the birds. Published by Michael Joseph at £12.95, this book is available post free (in UK & Eire) through British BirdShop (see page ix).

'Bird Navigation: the solution of a mystery?' This book (to be reviewed by Robert Spencer next month: 'vastly informative and thoughtfully provocative') is for sale post free (in UK & Eire) through British BirdShop (see page ix) now.



Oriental Bird Club

The Oriental Bird Club has recently been formed in response to increased interest in the birds of the Oriental Region. Unlike existing organisations, the Club will embrace the entire Oriental Region, from Pakistan east to China and south to Indonesia.

Two bulletins and a journal, *The Forktail*, will be published annually. The bulletin will keep members informed of current developments in Oriental ornithology, and the journal will publish original material on all aspects of Oriental birds. The Club also aims to operate an up-to-date information exchange on the birds and birdwatching localities of the region and will co-operate fully with other Oriental societies.

A committee has been set up to launch the Club, with Richard Grimmett as Chairman, Carol Inskipp as Secretary, and Nigel Redman as Treasurer. In addition, a network of overseas correspondents will advise the Club at a local level.

An inaugural open meeting with illustrated talks is to be held in Norwich in March or April 1985. Further details and membership application forms are available from the Secretary, Oriental Bird Club, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

XIX CONGRESSUS INTERNATIONALIS ORNITHOLOGICUS



The 19th International Ornithological Congress will be held in Ottawa, Canada, from 22nd to 29th June 1986. Its President is Prof. Dr Klaus Immelmann. The scientific programme has been determined and comprises plenary lectures, symposia, contributed papers (oral and posters), round-table discussions, special-interest-group meetings, and workshops. Pre- and post-congress excursions and workshops are planned, as well as early morning

bird-walks and other activities for members and those accompanying members.

The deadline for registration and submission of contributed papers is January 1986. Additional information, the final circular and registration forms are available from Dr Henri Ouellet, Secretary General, XIX Congressus Internationalis Ornithologicus, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0M8.

Reduced price for 'The Atlas of the Birds of the Western Palearctic'

This book by Dr Colin Harrison, awarded the title of 'The "British Birds" Best Bird Book of the Year' in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 439, review: 75: 480), is now available (post free in UK & Eire) through British BirdShop (see page ix) at £7.95 (the former price was £15.00).

BWP IV The latest news from Oxford University Press is that the fourth volume of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* will be published early this spring, probably in late March. It covers terns, sandgrouse, doves and pigeons, cuckoos, owls, nightjars, swifts, kingfishers, bee-eaters, rollers, Hoopoe and woodpeckers.

The price will be £60.00. *British Birds* subscribers can order it *now* through British BirdShop, thereby ensuring that they will receive this latest *BWP* volume by post immediately that it becomes available.

Handbook of the
Birds
of Europe
the Middle East
and
North Africa

The Birds of the
Western Palearctic

Cramp

Volume IV
Terns to Woodpeckers

Handbook of the Birds of Europe the Middle East and North Africa

The Birds of the Western Palearctic

Stanley Cramp, Chief Editor

Duncan I Brooks Euan Dunn Robert Gillmor P A D Hollom Robert Hudson

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Volume IV

Terns to Woodpeckers



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Most established *BB* readers will already have acquired each volume of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* immediately that it was published.

There may, however, be some readers who were not dedicated bird-watchers back in 1977 when volume I appeared.

For the benefit of those whose interest in birds has developed only recently to the level of needing to own *BWP*, we have arranged a special offer with Oxford University Press, exclusive to *BB* readers.

The standard prices are £55 each for volumes I-III, and £60 for volume IV: a total of £225 for the four volumes.

If you want to buy all four volumes, you can now take advantage of this offer and obtain volumes I-IV for £195. Volumes I-III will be despatched to you at once (subject to availability of stocks) and volume IV will follow as soon as it is available (see announcement headed 'BWP IV').

This is a chance to start collecting the seven volumes of *BWP*, at a saving of £30. We hope that many of our new subscribers will take advantage of this very generous gesture by Oxford University Press. Orders can be accepted only if submitted by *BB* subscribers and addressed to BB Offers, 1 Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ; if possible, please use the British BirdShop order form on page ix (or a copy of it).

Reduced prices for some Croom Helm Books *Eric Hosking's Seabirds* by Eric Hosking & Ronald Lockley (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 76: 602-603), *Antarctic Wildlife* by Eric Hosking & Bryan Sage (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 75: 601) and the two volumes of *The Breeding Birds of Europe* by Manfred Pforr & Alfred Limbrunner (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 75: 438) are now available through British BirdShop at greatly reduced prices (see page ix).

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

'Seabird' In October 1984, the Seabird Group published the first issue of its new journal *Seabird*, edited by P. G. H. Evans and T. R. Birkhead. As the successor to the Group's former series of Reports (11-6), this was entitled *Seabird* 7. The new title marked a significant change in SG policy, broadening its scope and embracing an international field of contributors. Thus, while it will continue to encourage papers from the U.K., *Seabird* will extend the platform for discussion

and appeal to a wider readership. It will appear on a regular basis, with *Seabird* 8 appearing to coincide with the Seabird Group's Conference on 'Population Studies and Population Monitoring' at Denstone College, Uttoxeter, on 15th-18th February 1985. *Seabird* aims to cater for a wide range of current interests in seabird biology, and *Seabird* 7 contains 11 papers on breeding biology, status, migration, diet, moult and parasites. Apart from U.K. studies by several eminent

researchers, there are contributions from Gibraltar and Norway and a world-wide review of tick-borne viruses. It also includes (as will its successors) a number of major book reviews. Copies are available to non-members for £5 + 50p postage from 'Seabird' Orders, Seabird Group, c/o RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. The Editor welcomes contributions of original papers at the same address. (*Contributed by Euan Dunn*)

Little Shearwaters in Wales British readers of the Dutch journal *Ardea* may have been somewhat taken aback to see a note on 'Madeiran Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis baroli* prospecting on Skomer Island, U.K.' (*Ardea* 72: 236-237). This exciting event was never reported to the Rarities Committee, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel or the BOU Records Committee. We know no reason to doubt the observations . . . but it does seem odd that they have not been submitted (or even mentioned) to the secretaries of the three organisations which assess claims of rarity records, and it also seems regrettable that British observers should choose a Dutch journal for publication of such an exciting British event. The observations concerned a male Little Shearwater found frequenting a burrow from 26th June and throughout July 1981, and from 21st June and throughout July 1982. It was not found the next year, but a female was heard in flight on 3rd May 1983.

BTO in Southampton The 304 who—ignoring the natural impulse to rush off after Pallas's, Radde's, Dusky, and so on—attended the one-day joint BTO/Hampshire Ornithological Society Conference at Southampton University on 3rd November 1984 enjoyed a treat to rival that of hounding after the sudden late influx of eastern rarities. Following the indefatigable Guy Mountfort's opening, Dr Stephen Baillie focused attention on the movement patterns of waterfowl in severe winters. The obvious disappointment at Peter Davis's absence through illness was compensated for by Chris Mead's taking full advantage of his 'slot' to relate his ringing experiences in a north-to-south journey through Iberia: highly informative, lucid and humorous (though I'd still like to know how that Ménétries's Warbler got down there!). That tireless Hampshire worker, David Steventon, demonstrated the problems of interpreting movements of waders in the county, and Glynne Evans

outlined his and Tony Prater's studies of New Forest Wood Warblers (some instructive nest-site shots here). No more than 25 years ago, we could all delight in the sound of Stone-curlews on Hampshire downland and farmland: John Waldon showed how this beautiful wader has declined (1958, 28 pairs monitored by John Ash; 1983, only five pairs in exactly the same study area), owing mainly to changes in land-use and farming practices; the population is much smaller than generally realised, and the three-year research starting in 1985 merits all support. The highlight—at least for me—was Peter Harrison's eulogy of St Ives Island as *the* seawatch point in western Europe, if not the world! His knowledge of seabirds and their identification is staggering: yet 'If you try to identify skuas at ranges of two or three miles, you're a wally!' sums up beautifully the greatest current problem in seabird identification, although, to quote his six-year-old daughter, 'Great Shearwaters are easy-peasy'. An hour's talking with Peter will teach you more about seabird identification than ten years' literature study.

At the close of the conference, Mrs Puckering was presented with a well-deserved bouquet for all her organising work. All those who attended will look forward to the next get-together. (*Contributed by DAC*)

End of an era In November 1984, the RSPB said farewell to John Crudass, its Chief Reserves Officer. For 16 years, John presided over the Reserves Department, and it is in no small way due to his enthusiasm, commitment and drive, his wisdom and his foresight, that the Society owns or manages such an excellent and valuable network of reserves. The 100th reserve was notched up not long before he retired—but he would have cared a lot less about that than knowing that the other 99 were secure and being well managed: they all stand as a fitting tribute to his efforts. We wish him well in his retirement in North Norfolk.

Man of mystery Nicholas Pike, the first to break the code in our *Mystery Photographs Book*, received his reward at a special presentation ceremony laid on by Zeiss West Germany in London in November (plates 51 & 52). Apart from guest presenter Tony Soper and members of the Press, other guests included such famous names as Eric Hosking and Bill Oddie.



51. Some of those present at the *Mystery Photographs Book* reception in November 1984: left to right, JTRS (the book's deviser), D. R. Harris (runner-up), Nicholas Pike (winner), Eileen Parsons (*Zeiss West Germany*), Tony Soper (special guest), Peter Braim and Renée Koll (both *Zeiss West Germany*) (R. J. Chandler)

52. Nicholas Pike (left), the first solver of the secret of *The 'British Birds' Mystery Photographs Book*, being presented with his cheque for £1,000, pair of *Zeiss West* 10×40 binoculars and inscribed copy of *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* by Tony Soper (R. J. Chandler)



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Polyrectricly Jeffery Boswall has drawn our attention to this one-word title of a paper in the June 1984 issue of the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*. It concerns the occurrence of more than the normal number of tail-feathers on a bird. So now you know!

Gong with a difference Despite what some of his RSPB colleagues insist is more than a passing facial resemblance to a certain Middle Eastern religious leader, Bob Scott is well known, well liked and well respected by hundreds of birders all over the country. So we were delighted to hear from one of our spies that the All Bulgarian Committee for the Protection of Nature under the National Council for the Fatherland Front has certified that Bob has been awarded their Gold Badge for his active work in nature protection. The award was made at the International Symposium on the 'Role of Wetlands in the Preservation of the Genetic Material they contain' held at the Srebarna Reserve in Bulgaria in October 1984.

Berry Head We were pleased to learn in October 1984 that Berry Head, near Brixham in South Devon, has been declared a statutory Bird Sanctuary under Section 3 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. All credit goes to the local observers whose concern over excessive disturbance at the site prompted them to seek Area of Special Protection status for the site, with help from the RSPB and the NCC; a special mention must also be made of the firm and enthusiastic support of the owners, Torbay Borough Council. A major attraction at this regionally important site is the largest colony of Guillemots *Uria aalge* on the English south coast.

SOC Conference The theme of the annual conference held at North Berwick during 2nd-4th November 1984 was Scottish islands, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Isle of May Bird Observatory. Prof. Sam Berry gave a scene-setting introductory talk, then Ian Munro and Bernie Zonfrillo successively presented amusing accounts of the history and present-day activities of the Observatory. Dr Mike Harris concluded the Saturday morning with a fascinating talk on his auk studies on the island.

The Saturday afternoon is normally set aside for excursions, but only a (fool)hardy few braved the torrential rain and ferocious storm-force winds which battered the hotel all day. The majority preferred to stay indoors in the warm, though not, thanks first to the storm and later to the bar, the dry. Many attended a seminar on bird recording in Scotland.

Three short talks, also with Isle of May links, filled the first part of Sunday morning, Nicholas Aebischer on breeding Shags, Hector Galbraith on Kittiwake feeding behaviour, and Dr Ron Summers on waders of rocky shores. The concluding event of this friendliest of meetings was a showing of the film *One Man's Island*, featuring the work of artist Keith Brockie on the Isle of May.

The *BB* Mystery Photographs Competition was well supported, the winner, drawn from the three correct entries, being Michael Leven. (Contributed by MAO)

Night sites sought by Bangkok Swallows

The latest issue of the *Bangkok Bird Club Bulletin* reports that the overhead wires in Silom Road, used nightly by 200,000-300,000 roosting Swallows *Hirundo rustica* (see last month's plate 12), are soon to be removed and placed underground. Will this famous Bangkok spectacle break up, or regroup elsewhere? When we hear news, we will report on what happens. (Contributed by JTRS)

Rob hitched Our congratulations to Rob Hume on his marriage last autumn to RSPB colleague Marcella Sinfield. Not for them a Scillies honeymoon—but it was an ornithological one, catching up with the endemics and other things of interest in the Canaries.

New publications The Sheffield Bird Study Group has sent us two recent publications—*The Sheffield Bird Report 1983* and the latest issue (No 3: 1984) of their journal *The Magpie*. Unfortunately, it has not given us details of price or availability of either—but its Secretary, V. Gibson, 11 Mooroaks Road, Sheffield S10 1BX, will no doubt be able to advise you about these. This is a good place for us to mention that we have received several journals in the past without these vital details—please be sure to let us have them if you want us to give your literature a plug! We have also received *Birds in Northumbria—1983*, the Northumberland Bird Report published by the Tyneside Bird Club. It is available

from Mrs M. Cadwallender, 32 Manners Gardens, Seaton Delaval, Northumberland NE25 0DW, price £2.75. *The Shore-birds of the Orkney Islands* is a useful contribution to shorebird literature in that it details numbers and distribution on the Orkney coastline in the winters of 1982/83 and 1983/84. It costs £2.50, has been produced by the Tay and Orkney Ringing Groups, and is available from M. Martin, Flat 9, Upper Springland, Isla Road, Perth, Tayside.

New Recorder for Greater London

Andrew V. Moon, Chalk Dell House, London Road, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 1JP, has taken over from Peter Clement as Recorder for Greater London.

Scilly calling . . . A *cri de coeur* from Rarities Committee Secretary Mike Rogers, now in his new home on Scilly: please *don't* ring him up to ask what's about. He suggests, quite rightly, that this could make life quite impossible for him. He undertakes to feed the grapevine whenever the need arises. So, please respect his request!

Calling Southwestern birders! A 'One-day South-West Birdwatchers and Ringers Conference' organised by Chew Valley Ringing Station will be held in Timsbury, near Bath, Avon, on 9th March 1985. For details, contact Dorian Bullery, 36 Carrington Road, Ashton, Bristol BS3 2AG.



Recent reports

Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson

**These are largely unchecked reports,
not authenticated records**

The dates in this report refer to November 1984 unless otherwise stated.

The weather during November was unsettled, with a procession of Atlantic frontal systems crossing Britain and Ireland. Air temperatures were above average, and ground frosts rare in lowland areas. Low-pressure systems over the south of England during the first week resulted in several days of easterlies in North Sea areas, followed by a period of southerlies until the 20th, as pressure rose nearby over the Continent diverting

the depression tracks farther north. This pressure declined thereafter, and a series of particularly vigorous depressions brought very strong westerlies for the remainder of the month.

Unseasonal migrants

The mild weather and easterly and southerly winds resulted in many unseasonal records, with **Swifts** *Apus apus* being seen until 18th, usually singly, but in pairs at Beccles and Benacre (Suffolk). Even more surprising



53. Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Devon, November 1984 (M. P. Frost)

were four records of **Pallid Swifts** *A. pallidus*, two of these at Portland Bill (Dorset) on 10th, and singles at Strumble Head (Dyfed) from 10th to 17th and at Warden Point (Kent) from 14th to 16th. Other aerial insect feeders still surviving were a **Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* at Holme (Norfolk) on 10th; another nightjar picked up on Barnes Common (London) on 23rd October was found to be a **Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor*, which unfortunately died on 28th October. **House Martins** *Delichon urbica*, not so unexpectedly, were quite regularly seen, but ten together at Kirton (Suffolk) on 28th was unusual. A late crop of Continental rarities also arrived mainly in English east coast areas. **Pallas's Warblers** *Phylloscopus proregulus* were found at Portland Bill (two on 2nd) and another at Blakeney (Norfolk) on 10th; and **Yellow-browed Warblers** *P. inornatus* at Portland

Bill on 2nd, Blakeney on 3rd, two at Tynemouth (Tyne & Wear) and in Devon on 4th. A **Radde's Warbler** *P. schwarzi* was found in Cornwall, and another at Spurn (Humber-side) on 24th; a **Dusky Warbler** *P. fuscatius* at Marsden (Tyne & Wear) on 8th; and two **Arctic Warblers** *P. borealis* also in northeast England. This area produced further surprises, with a **Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* trapped at Tynemouth; **Subalpine Warblers** *Sylvia cantillans* at Hauxley (Northumberland) on 5th and Whitby (North Yorkshire) on 18th; two **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* on 4th; a **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* at Jarrow (Tyne & Wear) on 20th; and, at Spurn, a 'Siberian' **Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata stejnegeri* from 10th to 17th, a **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* on 17th, and three **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus novaeseelandiae*. Farther south, there was a **Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* at Blakeney on 17th, and, along the south coast, a **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* on 7th and 10th and a **Dartford Warbler** *Sylvia undata* on 10th at Dungeness (Kent), a **Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* at Stanpit (Dorset) on 4th, two **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* at Portland on 2nd, an **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* at Berry Head (Devon) from 4th to 13th (plate 53), **Wrynecks** *Jynx*



torquilla at Noss Mayo (Devon) on 4th and St Just (Cornwall) on 18th, and a **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* at Porthgwarra (Cornwall) on 17th to 19th. A late report was of the arrival of a **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* at Ballyraughan (Co. Clare) which remained throughout November.

Winter visitors

Following the records last month of **Arctic Redpolls** *Carduelis hornemanni* on Fair Isle, further reports came from Hauxley and Craster (Northumberland) on 4th, from Flamborough (Humburside) on 3rd, and one possible sighted at Wells (Norfolk) on 9th. These arrived with a general influx of 'Mealy' **Redpolls** *C. flammea flammea*. The only **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* reported were from Co. Durham and at Blakeney on 18th, and amongst the winter thrushes there



was a **Siberian Thrush** *Zoothera sibirica* on Orkney on 16th. **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* were scarce, with two reports only, from Bempton (Humberside) on 10th and Copeland Island (Co. Down).

Wildfowl

A staggering 26,000 **Wigeons** *Anas penelope* and 1,100 **Whooper Swans** *Cygnus cygnus* were estimated at Lough Foyle (Co. Derry) on 18th, and the **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* reported last month remained on nearby Lough Beg. Also in Northern Ireland were four **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata*, including one male, at Newcastle (Co. Down). Inland, reports of **Velvet Scoters** *M. fusca* were of 11 at Farmoor (Oxfordshire) and five at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 10th, and, among goose flocks, **Brent Geese** *Branta bernicla* of the Nearctic/East Palearctic race *nigricans* (known as 'Black Brants') were seen at Staines Reservoir (Surrey) and at Cley (Norfolk) on 10th. An elusive **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* was discovered during the month on Ogwen Pool, Bangor (Gwynedd).

Wading birds

A few Nearctic species stayed into November, namely a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* on the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) until 4th, **Lesser Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* at St Just until 18th and on St Mary's (Scilly) (plate 54), and a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* at Frampton (Gloucestershire), while a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* found on the 4th on the River Tavy (Devon) stayed

54. Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, Scilly, November 1984 (David Hunt)



until 25th. Of the European species, a **Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* remained at St Just until 18th, and the **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* survived on the Ythan Estuary (Grampian) into November. There was a notable disruptive movement of **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta*, with eight reported inland at Vicarage Farm Pit (Bedfordshire) on 18th and 32 at Nene-mouth, Wash (Lincolnshire), on 25th. A rare report was of a **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* in Co. Wexford, and a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* stayed on the River Yealan (Devon) until 11th.

Seabirds

Bad weather with easterlies over the North Sea on 6th pushed many **Little Auks** *Alle alle* onshore; some 2,000 were counted passing Flamborough, and smaller parties flew along the Suffolk coast, where 24 were counted in half an hour. Subsequently, individuals were found inland as far as Staffordshire the next day. Earlier, on 3rd, 300 **Little Gulls** *Larus minutus* were seen at Flamborough, with a **Sabine's Gull** *L. sabini* just to the south at Easington (Humberside). Late tern reports were of five **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* and one **Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* at Theale Gravel-pits (Berkshire) on 1st. The **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* was still to be found at Wick (Highland), as was the **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* at Newcastle (Tyne & Wear), while another was found at Willerby (Humberside) in mid November. Radipole Lake (Dorset) continues to provide more records of **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis*, one being present from 13th to 18th. A late **Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus* passed Berry Head on 5th, and a **Great Skua** *S. skua* stayed inland at Stewartby Clay-pit (Bedfordshire) from 17th.

Latest news

The first half of January was very quiet, apart from a small but widespread influx of **Smews** *Mergus albellus*. Few major rarities were to be found. The **Ring-billed Gull** and the **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia*

albicollis were still to be seen in Belfast early in the month, and a **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* was reported from the Isles of Scilly, seen mainly on Tresco, for a few days from 8th.

Review

The Herons Handbook. By James Hancock and James Kushlan. Croom Helm, London, 1984. 288 pages including 65 colour paintings by Robert Gillmor and Peter Hayman, 21 line-drawings and 61 distribution maps. £16.95.

This book's predecessor, *The Herons of the World*, by James Hancock and Hugh Elliott with 61 colour paintings by Robert Gillmor and Peter Hayman, was published in 1978 and reviewed in this magazine by Stanley Cramp (*Brit. Birds* 72: 234). He described it as 'superbly produced' and 'attractive', the text as 'well-written' and 'authoritative', and the paintings as 'highly decorative' and 'superbly printed'. Despite this deserved praise, the book has not found its way onto a large number of private bookshelves and the reason for this is simply one of price: £46.00 in 1978.

The Herons Handbook is more likely to achieve popularity than its forerunner, due not only to its more attractive price, but also to the fact that it is the direct descendant of the earlier work. The initial impression on the prospective reader is very favourable, created by the eye-catching paintings. Both artists have set a very high standard with their portrayals of each species in its natural habitat and it might be suggested that some of Robert Gillmor's plates may never be bettered. All of the paintings in the original book are repeated, though reduced in size from 350mm × 230mm to 234mm × 152mm, and there are four new plates by Robert Gillmor depicting a total of 60 white herons and egrets of 11 species, showing different subspecies and seasonal plumages and bare-parts coloration. The only criticism of the paintings, apart from the size reduction, is that the majority show just one bird of each species, resulting in many distinct plumages not being portrayed.

All of the world's herons, 60 species according to the authors' classification, are both illustrated and covered in the text, and numerous subspecies are also discussed in depth. With Sir Hugh Elliott unable actively to participate in this book, the widely travelled James Hancock has been joined by James Kushlan, a professional ornithologist of considerable field experience. After a Foreword by Roger Tory Peterson, are Introduction and Acknowledgements by the authors, there are general chapters on Classification, Courtship, Feeding, and Identification. These are followed by the individual Species Descriptions, each of which, where relevant, contains information under the headings Identification, Distribution and Population, Migration, Habitat, Behaviour, Nest, Eggs and Young, and Taxonomy. The text of the earlier work has been revised and updated, particularly the sections on distribution, habitat, behaviour and taxonomy, following substantial recent research by field observers including the authors. A criticism of *The Herons of the World*, that the accounts of well-studied species were compressed whilst those of little-known ones were padded out to suit the form of the book, has been rectified, the allocation of text space being more in keeping with the information known about each species. There is a distribution map for each species, correcting a major fault in the earlier book, and there are 21 splendid line-drawings by Robert Gillmor.

The hard cover appears well-finished and suitable for a book intended to be used in the field. It is also attractive, containing the same illustrations as the dust-cover.

The Herons Handbook is superbly illustrated, with a scholarly text containing the very latest information on the heron family. It is, in every way, a fine book, and will enjoy a wide appeal.

PETER LANSDOWN

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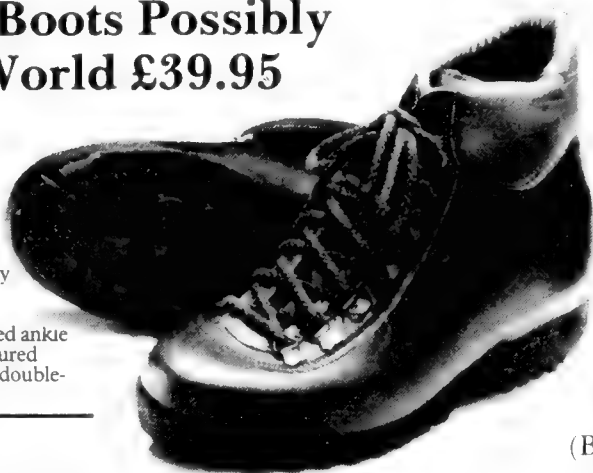
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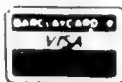
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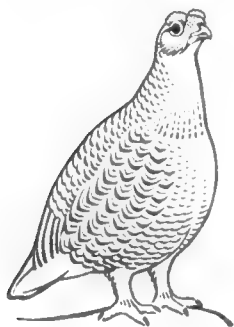
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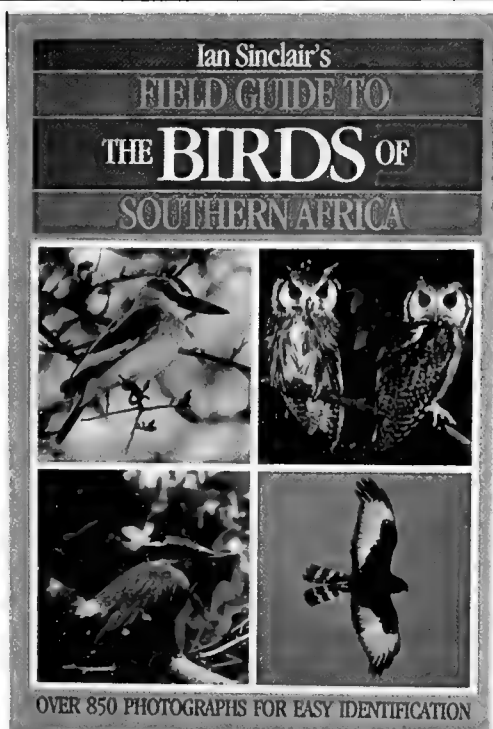
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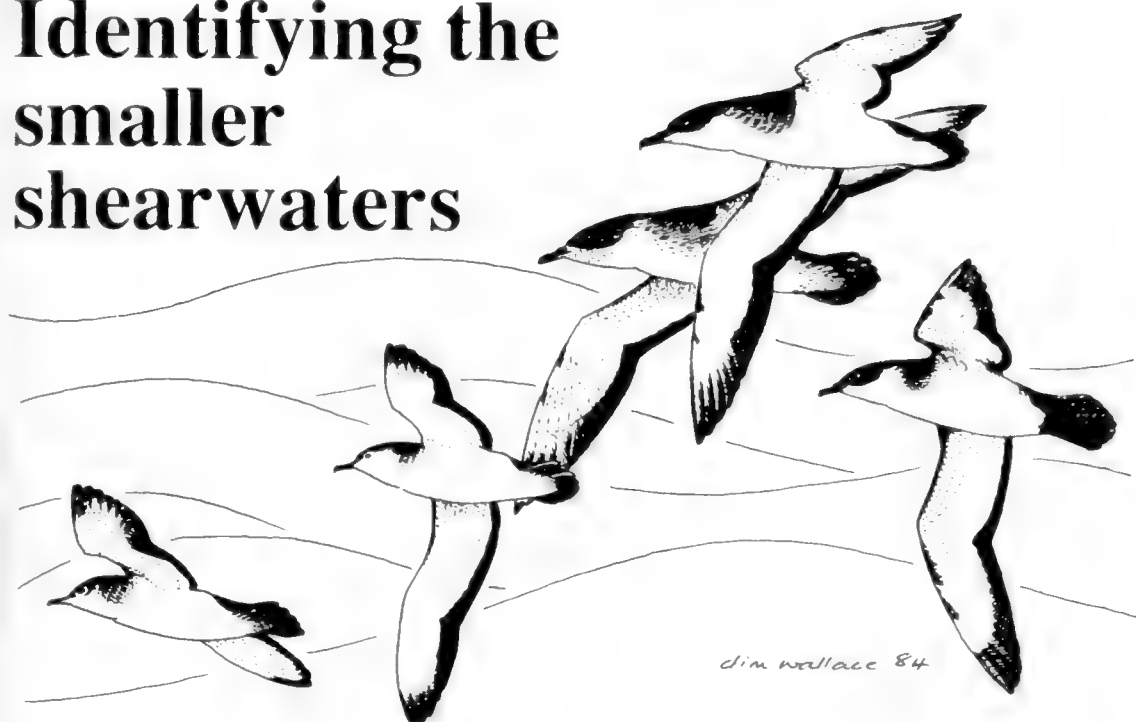
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British Birds

VOLUME 78 NUMBER 3 MARCH 1985



Identifying the smaller shearwaters



W. F. Curtis, P. A. Lassey and D. I. M. Wallace

Of the six shearwaters that breed in or visit the North Atlantic, three are distinctly smaller than the others. They are the Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* (of which three races are recognised), the Little Shearwater *P. assimilis* (two races) and the Audubon's Shearwater *P. lherminieri* (one race). Up to 1971, all three were on the British list, but, in that year, the last finally fell by the way (BOU 1971). Accordingly, most British and European seawatchers look out only for two races of Manx—the North Atlantic nominate *puffinus* and the West Mediterranean *mauretanicus* (so-called 'Balearic')—and one of Little—the Madeira and Canary Islands *baroli*. No other form is officially listed for Britain, with the annual appearances of the

Heading drawing: Left to right, Little Shearwaters *Puffinus assimilis* of Cape Verde race *boydi* and of Madeira and Canary Islands race *baroli*; Manx Shearwaters *P. puffinus* of East Mediterranean race *yelkouan* and North Atlantic nominate race; and Audubon's Shearwater *P. lherminieri* (D. I. M. Wallace)

East Mediterranean form of the Manx *yelkōuan* (so-called 'Levantine') acceptable to some seawatchers, but unsubstantiated by any specimen (see below).

The fact remains, however, that shearwaters are prone to exceptional vagrancy, witness the remarkable journey of a Skokholm-bred Manx to south Australia in 1961 (Slater 1971), and a few British observers have continued to note small shearwaters of unusual appearance. Unfortunately, the recent *Birds of the Western Palearctic* texts and illustrations on small shearwaters (DIMW and P. J. Hayman, in Cramp & Simmons 1977) appear to have done little to clear up the confusion surrounding their identification. Hopefully, the expert work of Harrison (1983) will do much more, and the aim of this paper is to shed some further light on the problem. Together its three authors have seen all the species, and all but one of the races concerned, both in offshore and in ocean circumstances.

The challenge in small shearwater identification

Small shearwater identification (and record judgment) demands the hard-work chain of long seawatching hours—hence field experience (and basic observational skill)—and skin examination—hence real understanding of structure and plumage patterns. The challenge demands a thorough grounding in the Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus* and its variations of plumage, size and flight action. There is no escaping this, for the commonest bird is the major source of confusion, and only when observers have passed its tests can they expect to begin spotting the other two species.

Typically, all three small shearwaters are black above, white below, and about as large as or smaller than the Guillemot *Uria aalge*. Dependent on wind strength, their sailing, skimming or fluttering flight is as characteristic as is their well balanced, cruciform silhouette. Unhappily, racial plumage, size variation and, frequently, poor observing circumstances act to obscure all the integral characters indicated above. Only flight action remains as a relatively constant source of diagnosis. For this reason, the treatment of the field characters that follows is unusually ordered.

Field characters of smaller shearwaters

Flight action

All three small shearwaters vary their flight actions according to their behavioural purpose, the speed of wind and the resultant state of the sea's surface. If the last two are respectively low and calm, they adopt a much more energetic manner of flight than their supposedly normal shearing, and the incidence of apparently effortless sails, glides, banks and careens falls markedly. In high wind-speeds and among waves, the last actions occur frequently, but both Audubon's and Little continue to show a greater frequency and persistence of wingbeats than does Manx. Strict comparisons between the three will probably never be drawn, but it is clear that the former have to 'work harder' to fly as fast or far as Manx, the difference in effort being obvious both in the greater distances covered by active (flapping) flight and the faster, more regular and less fluid rhythm of the actual wingbeats. The latter has been long recognised in the group name

'fluttering shearwaters' used for the smallest shearwaters in Australia and the Pacific. Any small shearwater that persists in fluttering more than shearing is likely not to be Manx. In our experience, this basic 'mechanical' difference in flight action is very striking, and is, if anything, exaggerated at longer ranges and not suppressed. Hence the many references, in the case of Little, to an auk-like, Puffin-like and even wader-like flight. It seems also that the differences in flight action of the smaller, black-and-white shearwaters is directly related to structure and size, particularly wing-span and wing-shape. There is a remarkable range of such characters in shearwater morphology (Kuroda 1954; Brown, Bourne & Wahl 1978), apparently allied to differences in feeding method. Generally, it appears that the greater the span and the longer the wing chord, the more effortless (and lazy-looking) the action of the flying bird, but the less effective (and propulsive) the wing beat of the immersed swimming bird.

Expert observers now perceive the flight action of the largest race of Manx, *mauretanicus*, as different from those of the nominate race and *yelkouan*. The difference was first mooted in British observations as long ago as 1953 (Ash & Rooke 1954) and has been fully confirmed in recent Portuguese, Mediterranean and British watches from 1976 to 1981 (C. C. Moore *in litt.*; A. Grieve *in litt.*; WFC, PAL, & DIMW personal observations).

An analysis of the various notes indicates that, compared with the nominate race and *yelkouan*, *mauretanicus* beats its wings slightly more slowly, and its compound action is noticeably lazier, smoother and freer, with a more frequent incidence of planing on widely stretched primaries and tail. It is the only form among the smaller shearwaters to invite, in any way, direct comparison with Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, whose flight action is the most effortless (laziest) of all North Atlantic shearwaters. This is an important point because it assists the separation of the darkest examples of *mauretanicus* from Sooty Shearwater *P. griseus* (their main confusion species on grounds of plumage colour and pattern, but possessing the most mechanical, scything wingbeats of all North Atlantic shearwaters in active flight). So far as we (most notably WFC in the eastern Mediterranean) can ascertain, there is no difference in the flight action of nominate Manx and *yelkouan*, as would befit two races that are very close in bulk and wing-span, in spite of their positions at the extremes of the species' range.

It is important to recognise that, while in light winds all forms of Manx may spend long periods in low, fairly steady and level flight over the water surface, it is rare for them not to show bursts of their typically freer flight. In wind strengths over force 4, their flight action shows much increased speed and confidence, with the birds 'attacking the weather' with the same élan as Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* and Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*, with marked lateral twists in body and wing attitudes, decreases in the wing-body angle, sudden, steep ascents which regularly reach over 20m above sea level, and long shearing descendant glides.

Audubon's Shearwater occupies a middle position in the range of bulk and wing-span shown by the smaller shearwaters, but sports a long tail. Perceptive observations of flight action of the North Atlantic form by

observers seeking to establish differences from Manx and Little are rare. Murphy (1936) was content to quote only John James Audubon's original notes on feeding individuals, and Palmer (1962) gave only 'wings flapped very rapidly in flight, much wheeling and fluttering in calm air, more gliding in rough weather.' Loomis (1918) wrote of the smaller Galapagos race of Audubon's Shearwater 'flight . . . usually low and somewhat undulatory, ascendant during the rapid wing strokes (which vary from 4 or 5 to 8 or 10) and descendant during the short sail. In rough weather they rise higher and prolong the sailing flight.' Most recent field guides add no further details, being content to stress merely the faster wing beat compared with Manx and other larger shearwaters. Happily, WFC is able to offer more. Having seen nearly 260 Audubon's Shearwaters flying in light breezes over a slight swell in July and August 1981, he noted that their flight alternated 'rapid wing beats with longish horizontal glides' and occasional lateral swings. Compared with his extensive experience of Little, the birds did not give 'a great impression of whirring wings or great haste' and their wing tips drooped at times, in a 'somewhat similar' manner to those of Cory's. It follows, therefore, that the flight action of Audubon's is intermediate between those of Manx and Little and (probably) closer to that of the latter in lower wind speeds.

Apart from WFC's comment, we have found no other comparisons between the wing actions of Audubon's Shearwater and Little Shearwater, but there is evidence of a difference in tail use. As originally noted by John James Audubon himself in 1826, the former has the habit of frequently spreading its tail during its sails, planes and banks. This tail action also caught the eye of WFC, but we cannot ascertain whether it stems from the direct use by Audubon's Shearwater of its tail as a planing surface or from the increased visibility of the tail due to its relatively much greater length. The former is adopted by Manx when in slow, food-searching flight. On the flight action of Little, Dr W. R. P. Bourne's note in Palmer (1962) has in our opinion yet to be bettered: 'appears very small and short-winged in flight, with flutter-and-glide type of flight of the diving shearwaters (specifically the small *Puffinus* species), but wings beat very rapidly, almost whirr, during flutter so that it hurtles through the air almost like a small auk' (see fig. 1.). For Canary Islands birds, R. F. Porter's notes read: 'in light winds up to force 3 or 4, flight low and rather fluttering—almost like Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*—with three to eight fast, fairly shallow wing beats followed by a short glide with only very slight shearing from side to

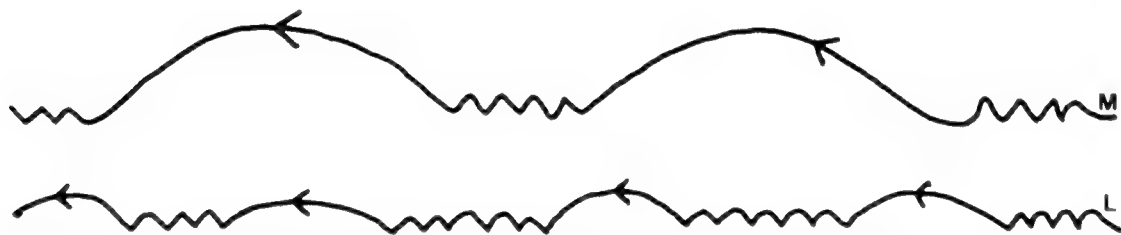


Fig. 1. Diagram depicting normal flight actions of Manx *Puffinus puffinus* and Little Shearwaters *P. assimilis*, in wind force 4-5. Note how Little flutters more than Manx, planes for shorter distances and flies lower (D. I. M. Wallace)

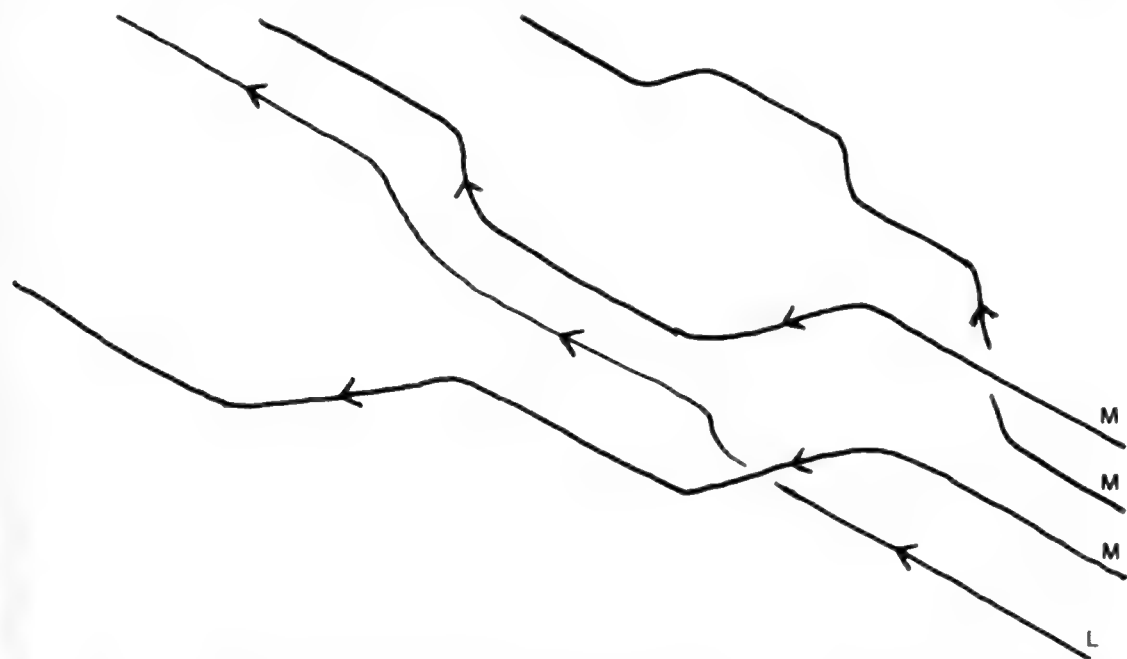


Fig. 2. Diagrammatic plan of flight tracks of Manx *Puffinus puffinus* and Little Shearwaters *P. assimilis*. Note how Little shifts less than Manx, hugging trough lines longer. Manx may 'jump' several wave crests at a time (D. I. M. Wallace)

side . . . frequently alighted on water . . . patter(ed) off the surface with wings held above the head.' All this is not to say that Little cannot sustain flight without rapid wing beats. In observations made respectively in the Canary Islands and in the South Atlantic, R. F. Porter and P. Harrison (*in litt.*) have seen Littles adopt stiff-winged sailing and gliding attitudes. In winds of force 4 to 7, such can be sustained for up to three minutes and allow flight peaks of 10m to 7m above sea level. Nevertheless, the general flight action of these birds remained less confident than that of Manx, with less-steep ascents, less-sharply angled twists, less strength and speed, and with their wings held more stiffly and more parallel with the water surface, being only very slightly bowed.

The differences in active flight of the three smaller shearwaters may be expressed in the form of a loose equation. If the wings of Manx 'flex' and 'flap', those of Audubon's 'flap quickly' and 'flutter', and those of Little 'flutter' and even 'whirr'. It is important to recognise that the differences are evident in the rhythm of the respective flight actions. Thus, Manx is the freest flier with its bursts of wing beats, steep ascents and glides or banks having a distinctively variable rhythm. All three races have a marked capability to continue progress by tilts or shifts in attitude or plane. Audubon's and Little both fly less freely, and their longer and more rapid bursts of wing beats give a much more regular rhythm to their action. Stiff-winged, they tilt far less than Manx, and their ascents and sailing ability are less dramatic.

Flight tracks are noticeably varied by behaviour. On passage, Manx frequently wanders between troughs, and careens high over wave crests; when feeding or loafing, it may circle widely or indulge in long zig-zag manoeuvres. On passage, Audubon's and Little wander less from a direct line, and the latter, if not both, prefers the shelter of troughs to the turbulence of crests (see fig. 2.). When feeding, they are very active in

defined spaces—tacking and fluttering rather than circling or wandering—and dive (from both flight and swimming positions) with astonishing agility, recalling penguins, auks, and even butterflies to various eyes (Brown, Bourne & Wahl 1978; also, in case of Little, PAL and DIMW, who have seen one escape the attention of a pursuing Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* by flying straight into a high wave). As just implied, both Audubon’s and Little fly closer to the sea surface than does Manx, and this appears to be so whatever the wind speed.

Size and structure

Size of the small black-and-white shearwaters decreases markedly from *mauretanicus*, nominate Manx and *yelkouan*, through Audubon’s to Little *boydi* (Cape Verdes) and *baroli* (Madeira and Canary Islands). Between full species in normal-sized birds, overlaps of measurement do not occur in bill- and wing-lengths, but they do in tail-length. Unhappily, runt Manx further confuses the issue. Table 1 sets out the customary measurements and figs. 3, 5 and 6 all display scaled flight forms.

Table 1. Measurements of small shearwaters *Puffinus* (in mm)

Sources: Audubon’s—Witherby *et al.* (1940), DIMW unpublished; all others—Cramp & Simmons (1977)

Species & races	Bill	Outer wing	Tail	Total length	Wing span	Longest primary	Sixth primary's shortfall
MANX							
<i>P. puffinus puffinus</i>	31-38	226-242	70-79	300-380	760-890	2nd	36-50
<i>P. puffinus yelkouan</i>	32-38	224-244	64-76				
AUDUBON'S							
<i>P. lherminieri lherminieri</i>	29-30	198-206	85-96	275-330	645-745	2nd, often also 3rd	25-32
LITTLE							
<i>P. assimilis boydi</i>	23-28	180-193	71-84	250-300	580-670		
<i>P. assimilis baroli</i>	24-28	170-190	67-78				

Structure also varies. The most externally visible differences are: (1) in the case of Manx, a long, noticeably hooked and tubed bill, and long and relatively narrow wings (with the tip of the longest primary often visible as a sharp point) which set off a well balanced cruciform silhouette, (2) in the case of Audubon’s, a shorter but relatively robust bill and head, slightly shorter wings, and a noticeably longer tail, which combine in a fairly compact but relatively long rear-bodied appearance, and, (3) in the case of Little, a shorter, much finer, hardly tubed bill, a smaller head, much shorter and rounded, invariably rather paddle-shaped wings which give it a compact but not short-tailed look. In general and at similar distance, full-sized Manx looks noticeably larger, more loosely built and less compact than either Audubon’s or Little. Runt Manx may approach the latter two in size, but retains the general structural character of the species. Audubon’s looks larger, heavier and less compact than Little. Little looks noticeably compact, and its small bill shows only in close views (see again figs. 3, 5 and 6).

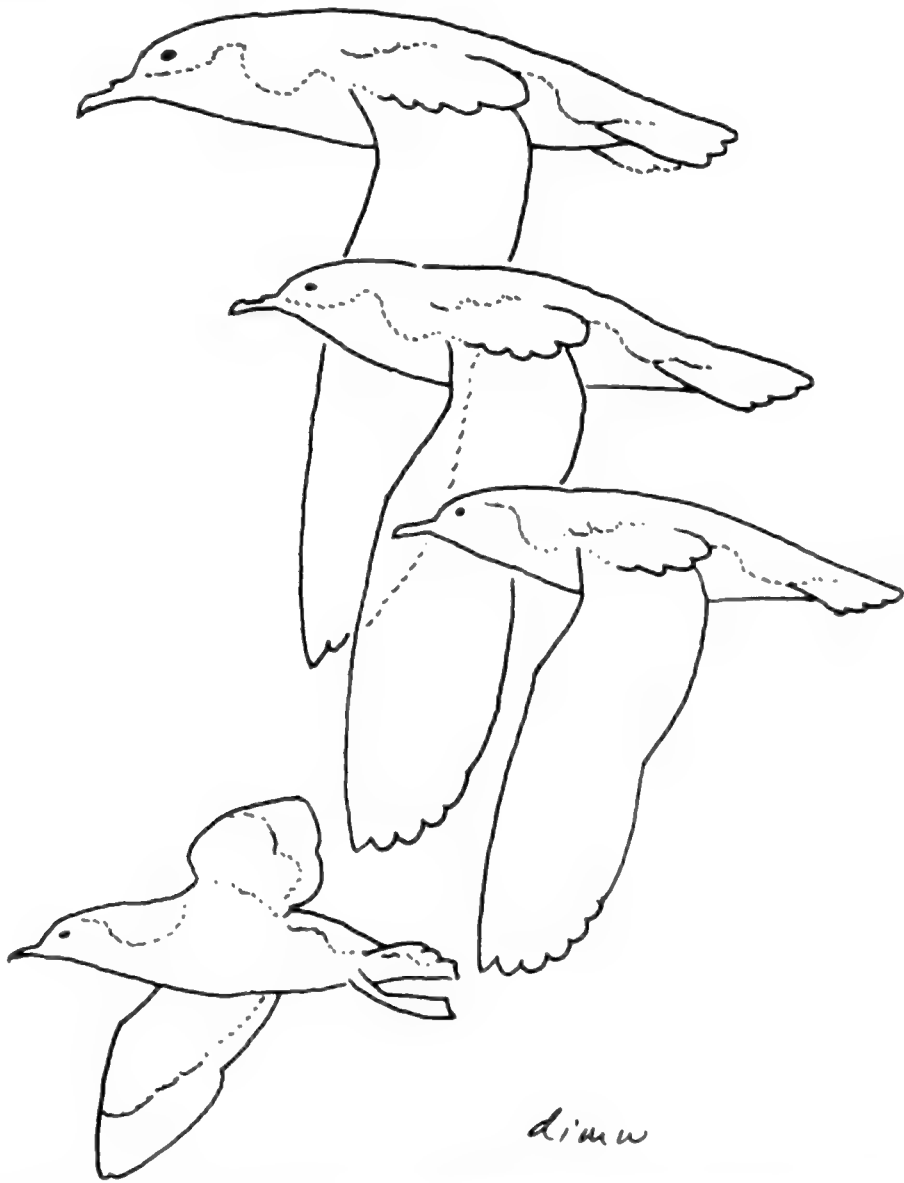


Fig. 3. Flight forms of, top to bottom, Manx *Puffinus puffinus*, Audubon's *P. lherminieri* and (two) Little Shearwaters *P. assimilis*. Note particularly compactness and rounded wing tip of Little, obvious long tail of Audubon's, and least-rounded wing point of Manx. Upper three figures based on flight photograph of Manx, with wings fully extended on downbeat; lowest from flight photograph of (West Australian) Little, showing position of legs and feet (though these only rarely visible at sea) (D. I. M. Wallace)

Plumage patterns and colours

Apart from the Balearic race of Manx, *mauretanicus*, all three species exhibit boldly contrasting upper- and underparts and, at long range, this divide may be the only pattern to show. At close range or at middle distance in good diffused light, however, differences are visible on head, neck, shoulders, flanks, vent, undertail and underwing. Particularly in the grey lights that enhance subtle tones, these can be surprisingly obvious. Fig. 4 emphasises this point. Table 2 summarises all visible characters, and figs. 5 and 6 display them at a scale compatible with optimum seawatch range. Fig. 7 shows the topography of a Manx Shearwater.

The effect of extreme wear or moult on the appearance of the small black-and-white shearwaters is incompletely known. In general, all black

Table 2. Specific and non-specific plumage characters of small shearwaters *Puffinus*

Forms	Characters
MANX <i>P. puffinus</i>	Head cap complete, reaching below eye and often extended by dusky face, throat and foreneck, making head appear large and slightly drooping. Shoulder patch large and dusky, extending obviously downwards before wing. These features characteristic of <i>yelkouan</i> and at least sub-adult nominate Manx, but absent from most Audubon's and all Little. Feet marked with pale grey-pink or flesh.
<i>P. p. yelkouan</i>	Dusky-brown to brown-black above, dull white below. Black outer primaries form obvious dark end to upperwing throughout year, and white to cream ground colour to underwing contrasts little with grey-brown leading edge and under surface of flight feathers. Flanks dusky, appearing mottled on some. Vent and undertail blonde to dusky-brown, darker than belly.
<i>P. p. puffinus</i>	Dusky-black to black above, white below. Upperwing when fresh is uniform with rest of upperparts, but when worn obviously browner over inner half (suggesting <i>yelkouan</i>), underwing variably mottled dusky on leading edge, on axillaries and on longest coverts, but white under surface of underwing-coverts still contrasts markedly with leaden under surface of flight feathers. Flanks clean on most. Vent and undertail noticeably white.
AUDUBON'S & LITTLE <i>P. lherminieri</i> & <i>P. assimilis</i>	Lower foreneck clean, not increasing apparent size of head as on <i>yelkouan</i> and nominate Manx.
AUDUBON'S <i>P. lherminieri</i>	Brown-black to black above; white but black-ended below. Upperwing when fresh uniform with rest of upperparts, but when worn browner over inner half, while pale cream-brown primary shafts may show at any time. Underwing obviously mottled dusky on leading edge and in wing pit, with contrast between white lining and dusky-brown under surface of flight feathers less distinct than on Manx and Madeira and Canary Islands Little <i>baroli</i> . Flanks washed or mottled dusky, and undertail black, forming quite square-cut and obvious dark end to underbody. Head cap complete, reaching below eye and over lores, but not sharply defined. Shoulder patch dusky but variable, on some as marked as Manx. Feet marked pink or yellow-white.
LITTLE <i>P. assimilis</i>	Shoulder patch dusky or grey, but small, not extending obviously downwards as on Manx and some Audubon's.
<i>P. a. boydi</i>	Dusky-black to black above, white below. Upperwing appearance not studied in field. Underwing mottled dusky along leading edge and dusky-brown along under surface of secondaries and primary tips, with contrast between these areas and white lining not so distinct as on Manx and <i>baroli</i> Little, and extension of lining towards wing tip by white to pale brown bases of primaries much less marked than on <i>baroli</i> . Flanks virtually clean. Vent and undertail centrally white, but laterally dusky to black. Head cap almost complete, breaking up around eye and on lores, and, thus, noticeably deeper and less sharply defined than on <i>baroli</i> . Feet marked blue, with dusky webs.
<i>P. a. baroli</i>	Bluish-black to black, apparently never brown-toned above, pure white below. Sides of hindneck tinged grey-blue on many. Upperwing when fresh uniform with rest of upperparts, but, when much worn, with greyer coverts and silvery secondaries forming distinctly pale panel on inner trailing edge (discussed more fully in text). Underwing little mottled on leading edge, but with noticeably black undersurface of secondaries and short primary tips, contrasting very distinctly with white lining and extension of last towards wing tip by long white bases of primaries much more marked than on Audubon's, Manx and <i>boydi</i> Little. Flanks clean, with rear feathers obvious behind wing base, and even encroaching onto sides of rump. Vent and undertail white. Feet marked blue, with yellow webs.

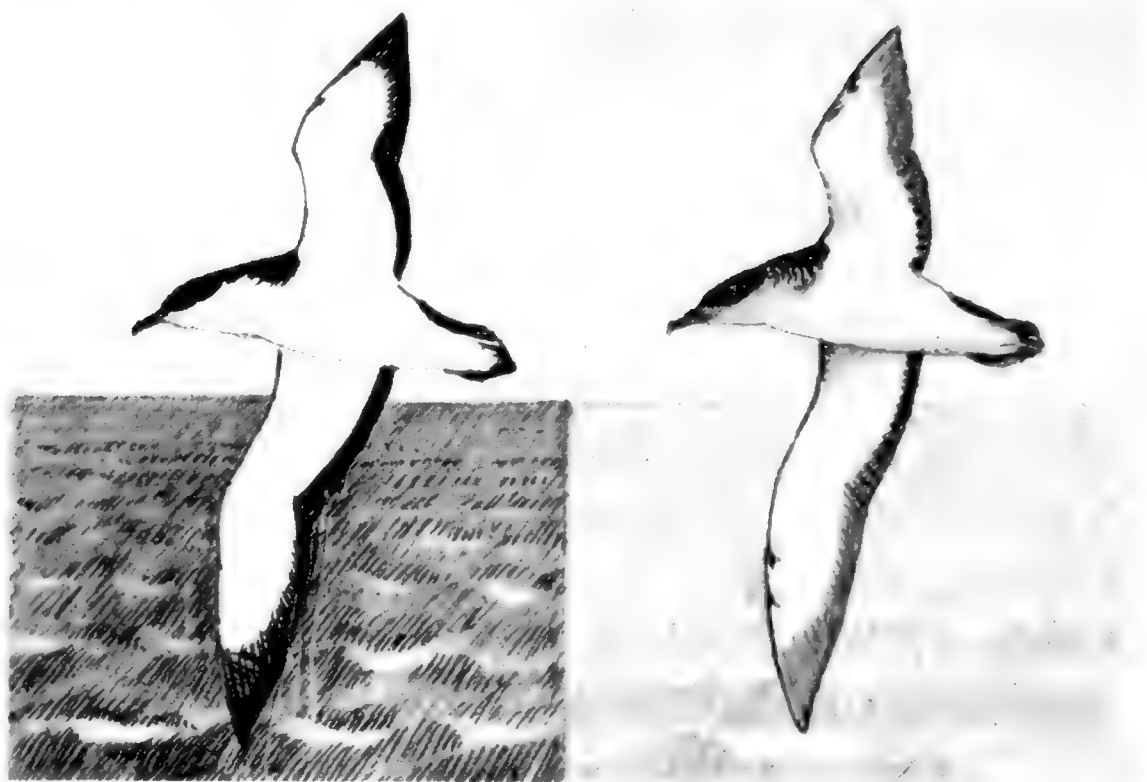


Fig. 4. Effect of different backgrounds on visibility of plumage patterns. Note how subtler tones and fuller markings of Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* become apparent against uniform grey ground (right). Against strongly contrasted one (left), plumage reliefs are much reduced. Both effects may be seen on single pass when broken sky and different light intensities create variably illuminated bird, sea and horizon (D. I. M. Wallace)

plumage shows a velvety bloom when fresh. On *baroli* Little, this is strong enough to produce a blue tinge, visible even at middle distances, but on the other species and forms it leads only to variations in density or 'jetness'. These are visible on Manx from July, with, first, the complete loss of bloom and, secondly, the abrasion of feather webs, producing increasingly brown hues, which become most noticeable over the inner halves of the wings and across the back. On Manx, this loss of uniform black upperparts may last through autumn and winter; on Audubon's and Little, it may be restricted to autumn. Certainly some Canary Islands Littles seen in August show noticeably variegated wings, with black-grey coverts and silvery secondaries contrasting with black primaries and back. The effect is sufficiently marked to recall the wing pattern of Redshank *Tringa totanus* (see fig. 6). Examination of a photograph of one so marked, taken by R. F. Porter, suggests that it is a heavily abraded adult. What evidence that there is of the normal breeding season and moult period of Little (Cramp & Simmons 1977) accords with this conclusion. Thus, any Littles off the Canaries in August probably constitute the worn, unmoulted, tardy remnants of a population usually dispersed at sea by that month. It would seem unlikely that such a group would send any vagrants to northern waters.

We have excluded *mauretanicus* from our treatment. To our eyes, most appearing off Britain look much darker than most textbook and field-guild plates indicate (see Harrison 1983 for proper treatment and illustration) and are more likely to be confused with Sooty Shearwater than with any smaller shearwater except their racial cousin, *yelkouan*. We are unsure quite

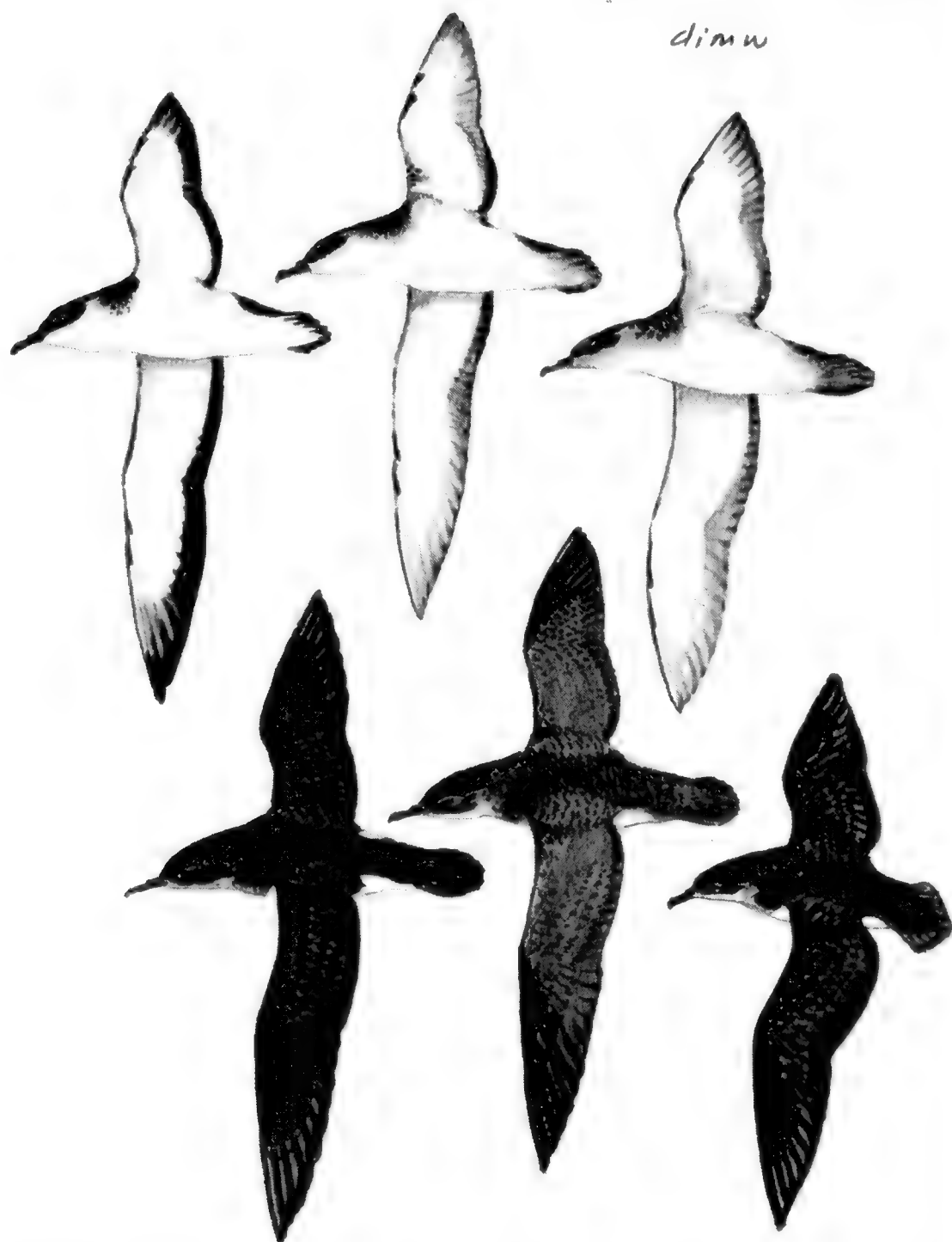


Fig. 5. Appearance at sea of Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* of nominate and *yelkouan* races. Left to right above, typical nominate Manx, 'pale' *yelkouan* and 'dark' *yelkouan*; left to right below, typical nominate Manx (showing dark-headed look of some), *yelkouan* and runt nominate Manx (banking with tail spread and briefly appearing as compact as Little). (See text and table 2 for further discussion) (*D. I. M. Wallace*)

where to draw the line between pale *mauretanicus* and dark *yelkouan* on plumage characters, unless it be that the former shows uniform upperwings and no clear divide between upper and lower surfaces.

Settled appearances of small shearwaters

On the water, small shearwaters appear as rather unbuoyant, attenuated birds, vaguely recalling a larger auk or (when feeding) a strange kind of

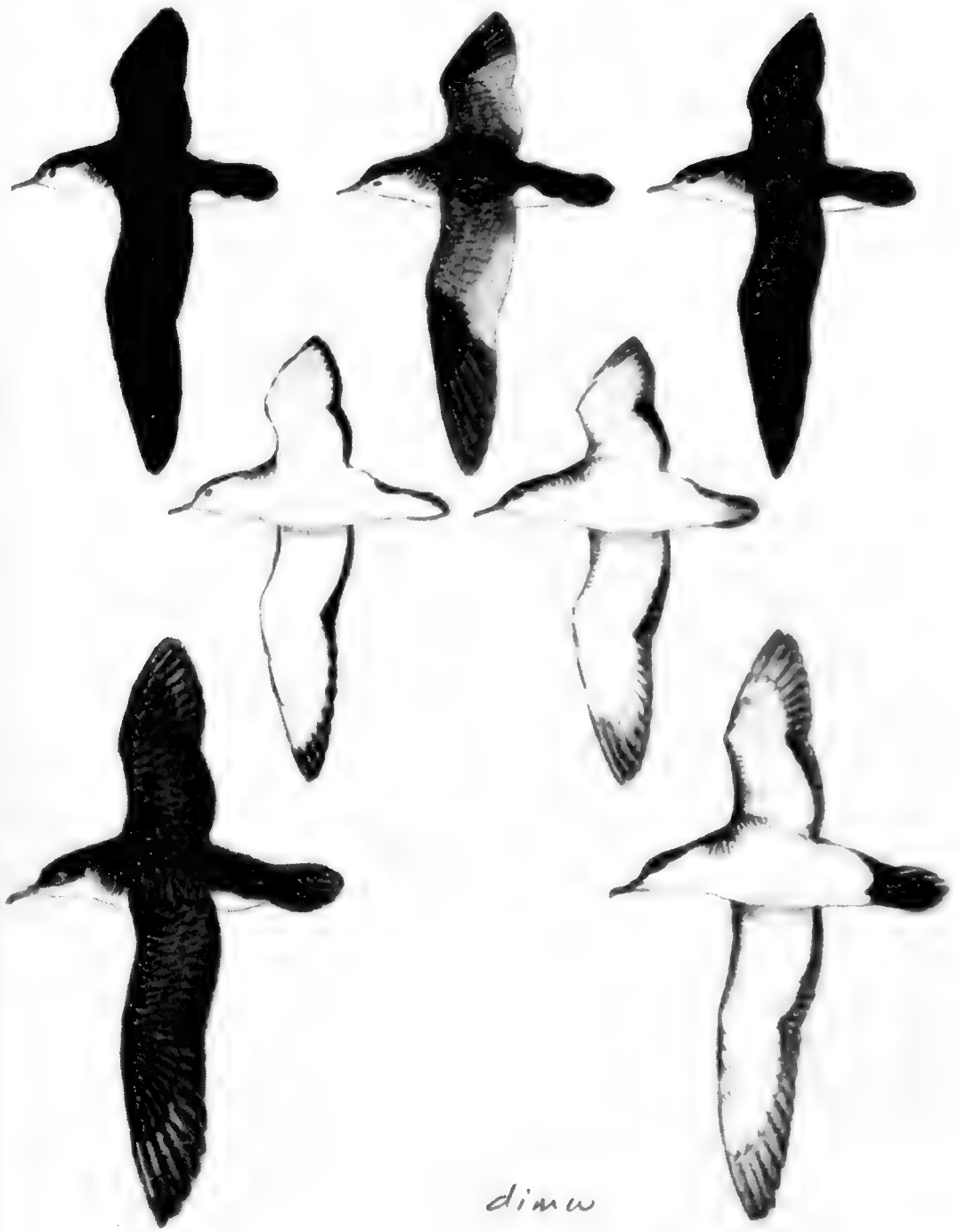


Fig. 6. Appearance at sea of Audubon's *Puffinus lherminieri* and Little Shearwaters *P. assimilis*. Left to right above, Little of Madeira and Canary Islands race *baroli*, worn adult of same race *baroli* (in August per R. F. Porter) and Little of Cape Verde race *boydi*. Left and right centre, Little of Madeira and Canary Islands race *baroli* and of Cape Verde race *boydi*. Left and right below, Audubon's. (See text and table 2 for further discussion) (D. I. M. Wallace)

duck (see fig. 8). Their attenuation is partly illusory, since their usually black upperparts are more striking than their white underparts, but is most striking in the extension of bill and the backwards projection of usually raised wing tips and tail. The relative position of the last two is helpful in the separation of settled birds. On Little, the wing tips meet the tail end; on Manx, they extend just past, but on the long-tailed Audubon's they fall well

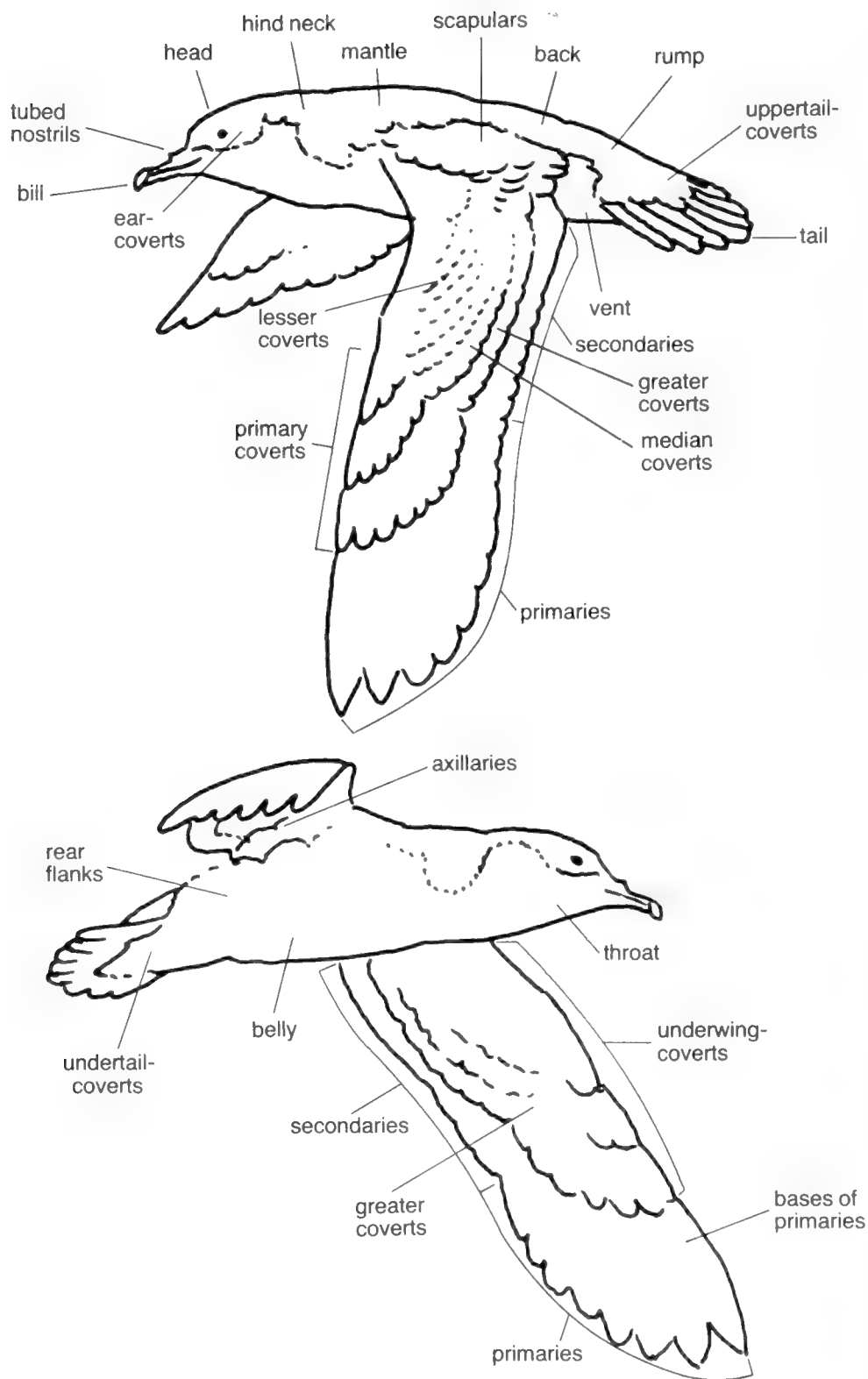


Fig. 7. Topography of Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*. Note pattern of head, neck and chest marks, and tracts of underwing, upon which most visible characters are displayed (D. I. M. Wallace)

short. When bill shapes are evident, the proportionately heavier and more robust bill of Audubon's is obvious and gives it a heavier-headed appearance than either Manx or the fine-billed Little.

Sea ranges of small shearwaters

Cramp & Simmons (1977) for the whole marine surround, and Wallace & Bourne (1981) for the east coast, have recently restated the marine distribution of Manx and Little around Britain. The general pattern of the former's occurrences is well established, needing no repetition here for the nominate race of Manx and for *mauretanicus*. As stated in the introduction, the observations of *yelkouan* remain open to debate—with only one claim published in detail (Cade 1983)—but, since 1976 off Flamborough Head, North Humberside, their pattern of occurrence has followed that of *mauretanicus*, with 12 records of 15 individuals spread from May to December (seven records from 28th August to 26th September) and their general incidence being about one *yelkouan* to nine *mauretanicus*. The mean date of the July to October *yelkouan* off Flamborough Head is 14 days later than that of *mauretanicus* and from three to 12 weeks later than the (erratically timed) peak passages of nominate Manx (Flamborough Ornithological Group). The latter difference in timing seems quite incompatible with the view that British '*yelkouan*' are merely faded adult Manx among fresh plumaged juveniles (per P. J. Grant). Thus, there seems to be no reason to doubt that individuals of the race *yelkouan* reach British waters. They are long known to reach the western Mediterranean (Cramp & Simmons 1977; also A. M. Allport *in litt.*, who has seen them off Tunisia in January, and DIMW, who has seen them mixed with nominate Manx off northern Morocco in December) and some reached the Portuguese coast in mid October 1980 and again in January and February 1981 (C. C. Moore *in litt.*; see also Harrison 1983). Thus, the Strait of Gibraltar does not stop up this race's bottle and, with the proven over-sea speed of Manx remembered, vagrancy to the North Sea is no great journey for it.

The occurrences of Little and, as yet may be proved, Audubon's off Britain and Ireland are not well established, and additional comment is required. Both are adapted to warm water around their breeding stations, and, in the southern section of the North Atlantic, they occupy opposing positions. Audubon's is scattered through the outer Caribbean archipelagos, having nested no nearer to Britain than Bermuda. Little is concentrated around the oceanic outcrops of the East Atlantic from the Azores and Salvages south to the Cape Verdes, nesting no nearer than Sao Miquel.

Audubon's is supposed to be a sedentary bird, but there is evidence of occasional far-flung dispersal, with the occurrences long known from latitudes as far north as 37° (Murphy 1936). How much farther north or east Audubon's strayed was not known until August 1981, when WFC was lucky enough to sail along the track of the tropical storm *Dennis* and witness a dramatic displacement of that species over 4,200 km. Daily records of up to 20 Audubon's (34 in all) stretched ENE and northeast from 38°10'N 65°53'W to 48°30'N 39°10'W and lasted from 22nd to 26th August. The last three individuals were almost halfway across the North Atlantic. It is also clear from WFC's observations that Audubon's frequently strays north to at least 39°N off the southeast coasts of North America and that it does so in the company of Cory's Shearwater, Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*,

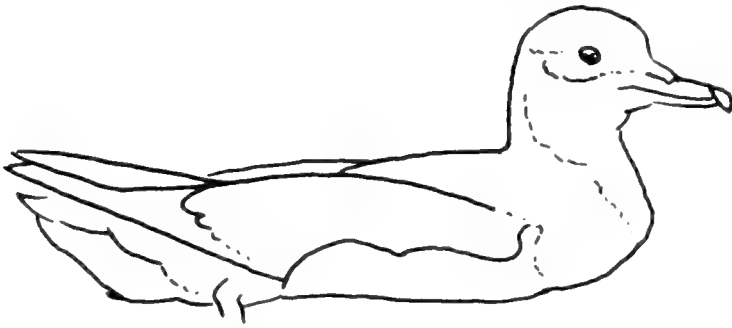


Fig. 8. Form of Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* settled on sea. Note position of wing points, which differs from both Audubon's *P. therminieri* and Little *P. assimilis* (D. I. M. Wallace)

Sooty Shearwater, Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, and three more supposedly tropical species, the Capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata*, the Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* and the Sooty Tern *S. fuscata*. We feel that it is wrong to exclude Audubon's Shearwater from the list of potential trans-atlantic vagrants. It may well be that the removal of the 1936 Sussex bird from the British list (*Ibis* 120: 411) was over-hasty.

The Little Shearwater is also supposed to lack definite migrations, but there is much evidence of amazingly far-flung dispersal from its normal northern range of up to 44°N and 35° and 10°W. From that area, it has radiated west across the Atlantic to South Carolina, WNW to Nova Scotia, north to near Rockall, and north to NNE to Ireland and Britain, northeast to the Federal German Republic (inland at Bodensee) and east to Italy (Cramp & Simmons 1977; *Sea Swallow* 25: 16). The fan of known vagrancy exceeds 180°; the northern limit is 58°N; and the species has even reached the Skagerrack, off Denmark. WFC has seen Little Shearwaters two-thirds of the way west across the Atlantic, at 42°30'N 48°45'W on 9th August 1966, and halfway up the Bay of Biscay, at 46°09'N 08°05'W on 11th September 1981. Both these records fall in the fan already described. Increasingly, it looks as though Little may well circulate in British waters as does Cory's (Wallace & Bourne 1981). Certainly, it is wrong to regard it as occurring mainly off southwest Ireland (BOU 1971), where it has recently become scarce (K. Preston *in litt.*) while British east coast observations have mounted. It should be noted, however, that Little breeds earlier than Cory's (eggs in February and March, not May to July) and, thus, adults and juveniles are free to wander from late May onwards. Certainly, most are absent from Madeira from July to November and from the Canaries from July to February (Bannerman 1963). Either Audubon's or Little (or both) also appear in the northwest Atlantic north to 56°N and west to 49°W, in July, August, November and December (Cramp & Simmons 1977; DIMW, personal observation). WFC's observations of August 1981 suggest that they could come in sight of each other in this region, as they do along the North American east coast.

One further point may be made here. Manx does not normally pair and breed until it is five or six years old. Many of those seen off British coasts away from breeding colonies are considered to be immatures. The age of maturity of Audubon's and Little is not yet known, but it seems unlikely to

be less than three years. Thus, the chances of most vagrant tubenoses being inexperienced, highly dispersive immatures seem great. Our understanding of the farthest-flung behaviour of such birds is limited, but news has recently broken of dramatic events in a Welsh colony of Manx Shearwaters. In 1981 and 1982 a male and in 1983 a female Little Shearwater have been heard in or over burrows from May to July (James & Alexander 1984). The former was examined in the hand and photographed, but the Rarities Committee has yet to pass judgment on any of these records. If they are accepted, sights will undoubtedly be raised by many birdwatchers, but future records will still have to pass the tests in observation discussed in this paper.

Advice on observation

With the passage of small shearwaters past seawatch points usually lasting less than two minutes and often being at awkward light angles, it is important to adopt a disciplined approach to observation and note-taking. In our experience, differences in flight action and size strike the eye first, and it makes sense to begin with assessing these fully, leaving plumage examination to the closest or best-lit stage of the pass, and then returning smartly to a further check of flight action, structure and size. With current record reviewers likely to favour well-noted plumage characters before those that can be fully learnt only with years of experience, it is essential not to fuss over plumage tones or foot colour, and concentrate most upon head and neck, underwing and undertail patterns. When a small shearwater passes a group of observers, it is helpful if one forsakes the use of a telescope and continues to observe the bird through binoculars in order to increase the direct chances of flight action and size comparison with other seabirds. Once a small shearwater has disappeared, it also makes sense to wait for another tubenose (hopefully the widespread Manx) to cover its tracks and provide close-timed comparison of action and appearance for the final notebook entry. Again, if a group of observers is concerned, it is also important (1) not to suppress discussion of the bird when in sight, but (2) to have the individual descriptions written as separately as possible, since differing perceptions of characters will almost certainly add to a greater total record of the bird. After all, it is crucial not to approach the finding and identification of small shearwaters without a full commitment to seawatching: that most challenging and most rewarding pursuit for birdwatchers.

Conclusions

Small-shearwater identification demands a long apprenticeship. It should begin with study of Manx Shearwater, and the identification of Little or Audubon's Shearwater will always require remarkable perception. At all ranges, the separation of Manx from Audubon's and Little is best based on flight action, structure and size. At closer ranges and in lights revealing true plumage patterns and colours, other characters are available to the expert eye, but most are subject to specific and subspecific overlap. Notation of head-, underwing- and undertail-patterns are particularly important.

A review of the thin but growing record of the non-breeding distribution of Audubon's and Little Shearwaters demonstrates respective dispersal or vagrancy of at least 4,200km and 5,600km. The former may well be displaced into the temperate west North Atlantic by tropical storms. The latter has ranged north to the latitudes of north Scotland and may well reach every temperate part of the North Atlantic. Hopefully, this paper will assist seawatchers and then reviewers not to give up on small, fluttering shearwaters. They are not Manx!

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the members of the Flamborough Ornithological Group for sustaining our morale while clarifying a vexed subject; especially to Peter Harrison, who has given the paper an almost unqualified blessing; and to Richard Porter, who added important information; and to Andrew Allport for assisting with the typing of the text.

Summary

The field identification of Manx *Puffinus puffinus*, Little *P. assimilis* and Audubon's Shearwaters *P. lherminieri*, using flight action, size, structure and plumage patterns and colours, is discussed and their at-sea distributions summarised.

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PhotoSpot

9. Knot



55. Juvenile Knot *Calidris canutus*, Cornwall, September 1981 (*S. C. Hutchings*)

Adult Knots *Calidris canutus* normally spend a British September in dense, wary, moulting flocks on our largest estuaries. In contrast, juveniles fresh from Greenland or Arctic Canada may appear in habitats shunned by the adults, and may be extremely tame. The dark subterminal lines obvious on the wing-coverts and larger scapulars confirm that this is a juvenile: winter-plumage feathers are almost plain grey, with a narrow dark shaft-streak.

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Seventy-five years ago...

'A Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) was shot at Newhythe, near Aylesford, Kent, on November 25th, 1909. I am pleased to say that a police prosecution followed, but the defendant, who pleaded ignorance of the identity of the bird, was let off with the payment of the costs of the hearing. J. H. ALLCHIN.' (*Brit. Birds* 3: 338, March 1910).

Mystery photographs



56. Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Sri Lanka, January 1977 (Peder Weibull)

99 The combination of comparatively large head, large eye, slender legs and short bill clearly shows last month's mystery bird (plates 50 & 56) to be a plover. Furthermore, the single breast band (albeit broken in the middle) coupled with otherwise white underparts and prominent facial pattern narrows the field a little, to eight species of *Charadrius* on the Western Palearctic list.

The white collar clearly does not encircle the nape, although the nape is a shade paler than the crown, upperparts and breast band. This feature alone rules out all thoughts of Little Ringed *C. dubius*, Ringed *C. hiaticula* and

57. Lesser *Charadrius mongolus* (left) and Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii* (right), Kenya, October 1981 (J. S. Robertson)



Semipalmated Plovers *C. semipalmatus*, all three of which also have legs which are paler and shorter than those of the mystery bird. Caspian Plover *C. asiaticus* can also be dismissed, as, although it has very long legs and a brownish nape, the legs are usually pale, it has a broader and more diffuse breast band, and it is a far more elegant bird, with whiter lores.

In fact, the dark legs and broken breast band immediately suggest Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus*. Kentish, however, has a complete white collar, and legs not quite so long as those of the mystery plover.

Some juvenile Kittlitz's Sand Plovers *C. pecuarius* are very plain-looking birds (*Dutch Birding* 4: 113-130), but differ from the mystery bird in having still longer legs, a more elegant appearance, only small diffuse breast patches, and a whitish nape band.

It must, therefore, be either a Lesser *C. mongolus* or a Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*. Deciding between the two can be tricky, whether in or out of breeding plumage, and, although specific differences have been confused, many of the problems have at last been more or less resolved (*Brit. Birds* 75: 94-95). The pointers to look for are leg length (Greater has considerably more of the tibial length exposed), leg colour (palish greenish-grey to fleshy grey on Greater, dark grey to dark grey-green on Lesser), shape of head (Lesser tends to show a steeper forehead and a more rounded crown), bill structure (Greater *usually* has a stouter bill) and shape of supercilium (Greater tends to have a less conspicuous supercilium, which is also more diffuse behind the eye).

Head shape is difficult to judge on lone birds such as this, but the mystery plover has a very thin bill, a prominent supercilium reaching well behind the eye, very dark legs, and little tibial length exposed: all features which show it to be a Lesser Sand Plover. The very weak bill is clearly that of a

58. Mystery photograph 100. Identify the species. Answer next month



Lesser in this case, but fairly stout-billed Lessers and quite weak-billed Greaters do occur, so care is needed. This Lesser Sand Plover was photographed in Sri Lanka in January 1977 by Peder Weibull.

S. C. MADGE

Notes

Aberrant Slavonian Grebe A thick-billed and unfamiliarly plumaged Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* appeared on the open marine bathing-pool at Penzance, Cornwall, on 28th December 1981. It was distinctly odd-looking: rather bulky, with a relatively thick bill, and a generally rather drab, smudgy grey appearance, quite unlike the immaculate black-and-white Slavonians normally encountered in winter. The grebe remained until 14th January 1982, enabling me to note the following details:

Crown blackish-grey, rather flat with a semblance of tippets. Lores smudgy dark grey. Sides of head dirty white. Streak down hind-neck blackish grey, narrowing towards mantle. Sides of neck blotched and smudgy in appearance, created by lighter and darker grey areas; below this, a wide but ill-defined

greyish black collar, banded by greyish white. Upperparts dull grey to black, a little white area in wings apparent when stretched or flapped. Rear end mottled smudgy white, extending to ventral region. Flanks heavily mottled dark grey to black. Underwing pale or whitish. Iris ruby-red. Bill dark and thick.

Fjeldsø (1973) recognised three races of Slavonian Grebe, with the thicker-billed populations ('arcticus') being the breeding form of Iceland, northern Norway and Scotland. *BWP* (1: 105) states, however, that, in view of differences being slight and partly clinal, naming of subspecies is unnecessary. Details of the Penzance grebe were forwarded to Dr K. E. L. Simmons, who commented 'The bird should have been in adult winter or first-winter plumage . . . and should have been matched by specimens amongst the small-billed birds (there being no important plumage differences between the forms). So the question really is: was it an aberrantly plumaged, large-billed Slavonian Grebe or a hybrid—presumably with a Red-necked Grebe *P. grisegena*?' **BERNARD KING**

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REFERENCE

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Although it was seen by other observers, neither we nor Mr King have been able to track down any photographs of this bird. We hope that any similar individual will be described, sketched and photographed; we shall welcome details. **EDS**



'Natural' hazard causing death of Sparrowhawk On 4th April 1982, at Tophill Low, Humberside, I found an adult male Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* entangled in a hedge of privet *Ligustrum* with some hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* about 2m high. The hedge runs along the side of a wide dyke. D. E. Glue and D. N. Weir (*Bird Study* 18: 137-146, 147-154) stressed the proneness to accidents implicit in the Sparrowhawk's way of life; they listed collisions with netting, fences or windows, but implied that 'natural' obstacles do not present a hazard. It is, however, possible, or even likely, that collisions while hunting form a significant proportion of deaths of this raptor.

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Shell-dropping by Ospreys Hard-shelled food items are dropped and broken open by some birds of prey. Bearded Vultures (Lammergeiers) *Gypaetus barbatus* drop mammal bones and tortoises *Testudo* (e.g. Boswall & Crook 1968; Leshem 1980), Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* drop tortoises and dabb-tailed lizards *Uromastix aegyptius* (Ilany 1982), and Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* drop tortoises (Fischer *et al.* 1975; Leshem 1979). Indeed, Golden Eagles near Har Gilo, Jerusalem, Israel, cracked open 107 tortoises during the 1979 breeding season. Similar behaviour by Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*, involving the dropping of the shells of the large conch *Lambis truncatus*, was seen by Y. Levi (*in litt.*) in 1974 on Tiran off the southeast coast of Sinai.

Tiran is a treeless island holding 25-30 pairs of ground-nesting Ospreys, which feed mainly on fish caught around the offshore coral reefs. Whether one or more individual Ospreys were involved is unknown, but the behaviour was always the same. The raptor would position itself, holding the conch in its talons, 30-40m above a large 200-litre drum filled with concrete; the conch was then dropped, shattering on impact when it hit the drum. This behaviour was observed several times and the drum was surrounded by the remains of dozens of shells, all of the same species of conch. *Lambis truncatus* reaches a size of 30cm and is found in shallow lagoons in the reef area. It is also eaten by the local Bedouins. This appears to be the first recorded instance of such behaviour by Ospreys.

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Role of male Kestrel during incubation The role of male Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* in incubation is unclear. Richmond (1959) stated that there is no fixed rule, but that some males are 'assiduous sitters' while others take no part at all; Newton (1979) that they will sit while the female is feeding; Brown (1976) that they will take a small part in incubation; and Cramp & Simmons (1980) that they occasionally incubate for a brief period only. At 14.50 GMT on 10th June 1978, near Owslebury, Hampshire, I visited an active Kestrel's nest at the edge of a mixed woodland adjoining pasture and fields and directly opposite an electricity pylon. On my arrival, the female appeared over the field about 200m from the nest tree, giving a food call. She was joined by the male, who had come off the nest, crying loudly, and both alighted 3-4m from the nest; there, the male snatched the prey in a noisy encounter, whereupon the female flew straight to the nest and began to incubate; the male devoured a small mammal, before flying off at 14.55 hours. No more activity ensued until 16.16 hours, when the male reappeared and sat silently on the pylon until 16.29 hours. During this period, I could clearly see large and well-developed brood patches on his underside. He returned at 16.41 hours and flew into the nest tree, where he was joined by the female, who had just left the nest to receive the prey. The male then proceeded to the nest, and after about two minutes began to incubate. The female ate the prey and flew off a little later. This pattern of incubation alternating between the sexes was observed on two subsequent visits, during which the sequence was broken only once, when the female remained on the nest for two sittings. Such observations offer clear evidence of shared incubation, and, indeed, rigid alternation at the nest by both male and female. In addition, it is evident that this extended to a level where both sexes brought prey to their incubating partner at nest relief. On 2nd July, the nest was found abandoned, and, on 5th, desertion was confirmed; no reason for this was established.

During 1975-78, I observed a total of 36 active Kestrels' nests, and on no other occasion was there any evidence of a male incubating. The benefits of the female alone incubating have been stated by Newton (1979) as: (1) total food needs of the pair are reduced, (2) allowing the female to accumulate larger body reserves for breeding, if the male feeds her, and (3) the larger female being always present to defend the nest. The male Merlin *F. columbarius* may take up to one-third of incubation duties during daylight hours (Brown 1976; Newton *et al.* 1978); the male Kestrel is equally capable of covering the eggs, as shown by the case in captivity (Haigh 1973) in which a male incubated, brooded and reared a family after the female had escaped. Sexual differences in degree of aggressiveness in Kestrels are small; for nest defence, therefore, each sex is equally suited and each will participate (Petersen 1956). In areas where high prey density occurs, the reduction in food needs may be unimportant as the male could provide easily enough prey. (The pair I observed was part of a population with a density of one pair per 394 ha, the third largest on record, suggesting that prey density was high.) The most essential factor in the benefit of female Kestrels incubating seems, therefore, to be the maintenance of their body reserves during this period. This is facilitated by the male providing the

prey, since male Kestrels do not acquire their reserves before egg-laying. In species where males have an equal share in incubation and brooding (e.g. vultures *Gyps*), males, too, acquire such reserves (Newton 1979).

I should like to thank Dr Rory Putman for advice on the preparation of this note.

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Identification of a first-winter Sora I was interested to read the note by P. J. Roberts (*Brit. Birds* 77: 108-112) on the identification and ageing of a first-winter Sora *Porzana carolina* which was trapped on Bardsey, Gwynedd, on 5th August 1981. Neither this bird, being trapped, nor the previous one on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, from 26th September to 9th October 1973 (Wallace 1980), allowed prolonged field views, so it seems worth recording the details of a first-winter Sora which was present on the Great Pool, Tresco, Isles of Scilly, on 19th and 20th October 1983. It must be remembered, however, that this individual was seen much later in the autumn than the preceding two.

It was watched initially sneaking along the edge of the reeds at a distance of about 150m. At this range, the conspicuous white undertail-coverts immediately attracted attention and separated it from Spotted Crake *P. porzana*, but these were accentuated by an erect and continuously flicked tail. When moving through thicker reeds, it could sometimes be followed only by watching for the flicking white undertail-coverts. The tail itself looked long and pointed, recalling Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* rather than Spotted Crake. Wallace also noted an apparently longer tail on the St Agnes individual, but it is not known to what extent this may be an illusion accentuated by the whiter undertail-coverts.

The Tresco Sora showed obvious black lores, forming a solid patch between the eye and the bill, and this, coupled with a thick-based, heavy, lime-green bill, gave it a distinctive facial appearance even when viewed at a distance. It was, therefore, the combination of the undertail-coverts/tail and the facial colour/bill which facilitated the initial identification.

A little later, a number of birders were able to obtain confirmatory views down to 10-15m from the seclusion of a shooting butt. The black lores were again conspicuous and they extended below the bill to form a narrow connecting 'chin strap'. Unlike the previous two, the throat was essentially grey (only slightly paler than the grey breast) and lacked a dark central furrow. The heavy-based bill was entirely lime-green, lacking the orange base of Spotted Crake as well as the yellow base shown by the previous two

first-years. Other head markings were also distinctly different from Spotted Crake: it showed a thin, but distinct, black central crown stripe and a small, but noticeable, white rear 'eyebrow'. There was no white head spotting typical of Spotted Crake. The base of the undertail-coverts was seen to be rich buff, similar in shade to that of a Spotted Crake, but the outer and central feathers were conspicuously creamy white (fig. 1). Without any comparisons, it was difficult to evaluate its size, although it looked bulkier and probably longer-necked than Spotted Crake.

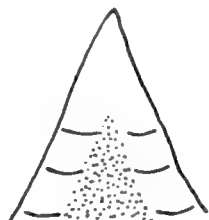


Fig. 1. Undertail of Sora *Porzana carolina*, Scilly, October 1983, showing rich buff base and white sides and tip (sides crossed by faint black flecks) (K. E. Vinicombe)

Wallace emphasised the importance of the plain tawny-brown wing-coverts on the St Agnes bird. Although a diagnostic difference from Spotted Crake, this was practically valueless as a field character on the Tresco bird. This area certainly was not visible at any distance, the reason being that the coverts were almost completely hidden by the overlying scapulars and the fluffed-up flank feathers. The plain coverts were, however, occasionally visible as a narrow, unmarked wedge, blunt and pointing backwards, when the overlying feathers sometimes became separated.

A feature which we were unable to test was the obviousness of the white along the leading edge of the open wing. Spotted Crake shows a thick white leading edge to the lesser wing-coverts (extending around the front of the wing from the leading lesser underwing-coverts) and this is usually conspicuous in flight. The photograph of the Bardsey Sora (*Brit. Birds* 77: plate 38) fails to show white leading lesser coverts, and Wallace did not mention it in his paper. I am very grateful to Peter Colston, who inspected skins of both species at the British Museum (Nat. Hist.). He found that, while both show white, it is broader and more prominent on Spotted Crake. While this difference cannot be regarded as a cast-iron field character, a flushed crake failing to show an obvious white leading edge to the wing would clearly be worth following up.

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REFERENCE

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Foraging and hunting efficiency of Caspian Tern During September and October 1981, in the Gulf of Suez close to Adabiya, Egypt, I watched the foraging behaviour of Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia*. This is a resident breeding species in the Red Sea and along the eastern coast of Sinai (Meininger & Mullié 1981); during the autumn and winter, there is an influx from the Baltic (Staav 1977) and the Crimea (Moreau 1972). The status of those I observed is not known. Up to six adults could be seen

fishing together, usually within 100m of the shore. From a height of 10-30 m, they searched the water below in leisurely flight. When prey was spotted, they performed a nearly vertical swoop with half-folded wings which were partly spread just before reaching the surface, resulting in a big splash; the tern sometimes submerged completely, and laborious wing-flapping was needed to gain height again, while the feathers were vigorously shaken. Quite often, the dive was not completed, but checked and converted into a swerve on stiff, outstretched wings just over the water for 5-25 m, followed by powerful wingstrokes to gain height. During a total of 160 minutes' observation on nine days, I recorded 61 diving attempts: 25 were completed, of which 16 resulted in a visible catch. When seen, the prey was always fishes of about 5-12 cm, but very small prey may have been swallowed immediately after catching. It seemed that a dive was completed only when the tern was pretty certain of a successful strike, thereby saving itself the trouble of taking off from the water after having lost speed. Another hunting method was observed on receding tides when small pools, sometimes containing fishes, were left on the beach. The terns searched the shore in low, leisurely flight, landed, and picked up and swallowed edible objects. Sometimes they hunted the shore by walking short distances (cf. Bent 1963), but this hunting method was comparatively rarely observed.

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Dr Euan K. Dunn has commented as follows: 'I think that the concept of the "intention dive" and whether or not it should be considered a failed dive are of interest. If the tern was forced to dive from quite high, it did the right thing, in terms of conserving energy, in being conservative about committing itself to entering the water unless catching success was more or less certain (16 successful dives out of 25 is a high rate). The ground foraging by this species is especially interesting, and apparently not recorded before in the literature. Unfortunately, this note was received too late for details to be included in the forthcoming volume 4 of *BWP*.' Eds

Several 'adult' Common Terns attempting to feed juvenile K. V. Cooper (*Brit. Birds* 76: 348) described from one to four 'adult' Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* presenting fish to a begging juvenile, and Dr E. K. Dunn commented that he had frequently seen this behaviour by Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis*. Since 1967, under the direction of Helen Hays of the American Museum of Natural History, I have participated in studies of tern biology on Great Gull Island, in Long Island Sound, New York, and have many times seen the behaviour described by Mr Cooper. Dr Dunn 'assumed that the strange "adults" attempting to feed were either failed breeders or immatures, deduced from their general hesitancy and tentative behaviour in the colony area.' A large majority of the Common Terns on Great Gull Island have been colour-ringed with individually unique

combinations, both as adults trapped on the nest and as pre-flying juveniles. Each year there is an influx of pre-breeding terns relatively late in the season; three-year-olds frequently, and two-year-olds occasionally, nest or attempt to nest; those that do not will hang about in the colony, and it is these that present fish to downy young or juveniles. Even if not colour-ringed, many (but not all) two-year-olds can be recognised as such by their white foreheads and dark carpal bars. The reaction by the young when approached is variable. Downy chicks and younger juveniles tend to flatten down and 'freeze', whereas older juveniles, as Dr Dunn states, may act aggressively towards the intruder. It is, however, difficult to distinguish between this aggressive behaviour and the normal enthusiastic open-billed begging by large juveniles that rush to meet an incoming parent. In any case, the intruder flies off, or at least backs away; should one of the parents arrive, it will dash at the intruder and often chase it for some distance. I agree that the sight of the young seems to trigger a feeding reaction by the pre-breeding terns, but this reaction is poorly developed: as if the intruder 'knew enough' to present a fish to the chick, but not to try actually to feed it. The tern is easily frightened off, even if the chick continues to beg, but typically it circles the colony once or twice, lands in the identical spot and proffers the fish again. Occasionally, after several presentations, the pre-breeding tern will swallow the fish itself; more frequently, it disappears from the area of the colony visible to the observer.

Mr Cooper's observation of as many as four terns simultaneously attempting to feed a juvenile is rather unusual. He implied that one or two of these were the parents, in which case it is surprising that no hostility to the non-parents was exhibited. I have seen three non-parents surrounding a juvenile, but a single individual is most frequent.

My observations, like those of Dr Dunn, have been in, rather than away from, the colony, but this may be because the observation towers on Great Gull Island are situated for optimum visibility of nesting areas.

This is contribution no. 66 from the Great Gull Island Project, American Museum of Natural History.

KENNETH C. PARKES

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House Martins' nests on ships With reference to Dr Cox's note on the nest of a House Martin *Delichon urbica* on a Scandinavian ferry (*Brit. Birds* 76: 232-233), on 26th August 1980, on board the same ferry, I photographed an incomplete House Martin's nest in a location similar to but not identical with that in Dr Cox's photograph (76: plate 92). At the time, I presumed that it was an uncompleted 1980 nest: the construction appeared to be new, but there were no droppings and no sign of the building birds.

I. G. JOHNSON

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Three fairly large car ferries sail between Spodsbjerg (Langeland) and Tårs (Lolland), a Danish internal route of 14 km and a journey of 45 minutes (a round trip of two hours). During July 1983, under the roof of the car deck of one ferry, I noticed one House Martin's nest containing young and,

adjacent to it, an old, apparently disused nest. The adults fed the young while at the harbour at Spodsbjerg, but I did not notice any activity once the boat was out of port. F. Guldbrandsen, the Master of the vessel *Taars*, informed me (*in litt.*) of the following. In 1983, there were seven or eight nests, all with young; he believed that all but one young fledged. This particular ferry is used only during the peak season, and is otherwise docked at Spodsbjerg. It has been used by House Martins since 1973, and the nests usually contain young when it is brought into service. The adults visit the boat only at Spodsbjerg, but will fly out to it before it comes into port and enter the boat as soon as the bow-gate is opened. Hr Guldbrandsen's letter implied that the ferry company deliberately does not use this boat at the beginning of the season because of the existence of the nests.

DAVID B. COLLINGE

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The Sussex Ornithological Society's files for 1973 contain a record of three pairs of House Martins nesting on the cross-channel ferry MV *Senlac* while it was berthed at Newhaven. Two nests were on pipes under the wing of the bridge and another in a similar position on 'A' deck at the stern. The adults did not make the trip of 120km to Dieppe, but left the vicinity of the ship when it reached the Newhaven breakwater and awaited its return nine hours later. At least one of the nests was known to have been successful.

S. W. M. HUGHES

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On 2nd June 1973, I observed a pair of House Martins building a nest (about two-thirds completed) on a ferry berthed at Newhaven. When the ferry sailed for Dieppe, one of the martins stayed with it for about 20 minutes before returning to land.

DAVID S. MELVILLE

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Full details of similar records will be welcomed. These will not be published separately, but will be filed for possible eventual summary. EDS

Territorial behaviour of Ring Ouzels The behaviour of two male Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* described by R. P. S. Wolsey (*Brit. Birds* 75: 382) is not uncommon, but I do not accept the assumption that they were necessarily migrants. In North and West Yorkshire, the first Ring Ouzels arrive within a few days of 15th March, and by the date of the observation (19th April) most are well established. During an ongoing study since 1979, involving over 140 pairs of this species in Yorkshire, I have observed similar aggressive behaviour between males on numerous occasions. In 1982, an area of about 2 km × 1 km supported three pairs, two on one side of a steep-sided valley with a major road in the bottom and one (the aggressor) on the other. On a number of occasions on 6th June, the aggressor flew across the valley into the area occupied principally by one of the other ouzels, which it harassed for periods of up to 15 minutes before being chased back to its own side. Ring Ouzels are much more colonial when nesting

than is generally supposed, and are not strictly territorial. In 1982, an area of approximately 4 km × 1 km supported ten pairs, which continually overflew and fed in the areas of each other's nests; two nests were only 100m apart. Ring Ouzels centre their activity around their own nesting sites, and the male usually sings from the nearest prominent feature; two or more individuals will often 'sing against each other'.

IAN APPLEYARD

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Orphean Warbler in Scilly From 16th to 22nd October 1981, an adult male Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* was present in the Higher Moors/Holy Vale area of St Mary's, Isles of Scilly.

We first saw the warbler about 15.10 GMT on 16th as it flew across the path between Higher Moors and Holy Vale. Even in flight, the large size, white outer tail feathers and black head made us pretty sure it was a male Orphean Warbler, a species we had both seen on the Continent.

Brief views were had as it dropped into a bramble patch. As is usual in October on Scilly, a number of birders were close by, and were quickly shown where the bird had landed. Fortunately, it gave excellent views as it fed sluggishly on the outside of the bramble bush at a distance of about 10 m.

During its stay, it spent most of its time in large bramble patches and was eventually seen by about 400 birders. It was photographed by Peter Basterfield (*Brit. Birds* 75: plate 212). The last sighting was near Holy Vale on 22nd October.

We noted the following details:

Large *Sylvia* warbler, larger than Blackcap *S. atricapilla*, being closer in size to Barred Warbler *S. nisoria*. Head rounded, sooty black, fading into grey on hind crown, nape and behind ear-coverts. Mantle, rump and uppertail-coverts dull, pale grey. Primaries and secondaries with grey-brown tinge. Secondaries tipped pale. Tail long, grey, with white outer tail feathers prominent in

flight. Underside of tail plain blue-grey. Underparts creamy, washed grey on flanks, becoming buffy on undertail-coverts. Prominently demarcated white throat. Bill large for a warbler; upper mandible dark, lower mandible blue-grey. Legs grey, strong-looking. Eye brown, with thin white ring on outside edge of iris.

This is the fifth accepted record of Orphean Warbler in Britain and Ireland, the previous ones being at Wetherby, Yorkshire, on 6th July 1848; at Portland, Dorset, on 20th September 1955 (*Brit. Birds* 49: 180); at Porthgwarra, Cornwall, on 22nd October 1967 (*Brit. Birds* 63: 178-179); and at Stiffkey, Norfolk, on 17th August 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 522).

J. M. TURTON and P. K. GREAVES

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Carrion Crow taking seabird eggs During June 1980, while carrying out a population census of Guillemots *Uria aalge* on Hermaness, Unst, Shetland, I observed Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* of the race *cornix* taking seabird eggs on three occasions: twice from Guillemots and once from Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*. I can find only one reference to similar behaviour (T. R. Birkhead, 1977, *J. Anim. Ecol.* 46: 751-764). In the case of the Guillemots, the crow alighted on the cliff close to an incubating adult; this

caused much anxiety among incubating auks for some distance on each side of the crow, and many were seen to 'alarm bow' (see Birkhead 1977). For several seconds after landing, the crow appeared to pay no attention to the Guillemot, while the latter alarm bowed continuously. When the crow did face the Guillemot, the auk attempted to withdraw its head and neck as far from the crow as possible while still covering the egg; the two remained in this position for a second or two before the crow suddenly lunged forward, seized the Guillemot by the wing and threw it off the ledge. The crow broke open the egg and began to devour the contents *in situ*. In the case of the Fulmar, the crow alighted beside one of a group of incubating birds nesting on a grassy slope close to the cliff where the Guillemots had been attacked. It behaved in the same manner as towards the Guillemot. It is interesting to note that the Fulmar did not attempt to 'oil' its attacker. Again, the crow consumed the egg contents on the spot.

To what extent this behaviour by crows is common in Shetland is not known. At one time, piles of egg shells (mostly of Guillemot) found on the tops of the Hermaness cliffs (J. D. Okill *in litt.*) were accounted for by suggesting that scavenging birds (gulls *Larus*, crows, Ravens *C. corax*) had found eggs at the base of the cliffs or taken deserted eggs to the cliff tops and eaten the contents. The present observations may point to an alternative explanation. T. R. Birkhead (*in litt.*) has seen crows on Skomer, Dyfed, attempting, without success, to rob Guillemot nests. He also described a particular pair of Carrion Crows of the race *corone* which co-operated in robbing Razorbills *Alca torda* of their eggs: they landed beside a Razorbill's nest crevice and began 'taunting' the occupant until it lunged at them, whereupon one crow grabbed the auk by the breast feathers while the other began to pull it from the crevice; as soon as the Razorbill had been put to flight, the crows consumed the contents of the egg.

Guillemots breeding in low densities are in greater danger of losing eggs to predators than are those which nest in areas of high breeding-bird density (Birkhead 1977). My observations accord with this generalisation: although the Guillemots which had their eggs taken were part of very dense colonies, they were occupying peripheral sites along the edge of the nesting ledge. I should welcome details of any similar observations, especially notes on known cases of increase in the incidence of this behaviour in a given locality.

JOHN MCKEE

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Feeding methods of coastal Carrion Crows During 1978-82, at Filey Brigg, North Yorkshire, I noted various feeding methods by a pair (the same?) of Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* which regularly frequented the seashore. By far the most common method was the taking of fish offal washed up along the beach, for which they competed with gulls *Larus*, but they also opened molluscs around the rocks (cf. *Brit. Birds* 72: 553) and occasionally robbed Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* of their already-opened molluscs. On 6th May 1982, however, I saw a Carrion Crow standing up to its belly in water in a rock pool. It was jumping up and down, stabbing with its bill into the water, its head going well under the surface. It continued this behaviour for about two minutes, wading across the pool.

when the water at times reached above its folded wings. With one of the stabs under water, the crow emerged with a fish about 7 cm long in its bill and flew to a nearby rock; the fish was still alive and was curling around the crow's bill. The crow placed the prey, probably a species of blenny (*Bleniidae*), under its left foot and repeatedly hammered it with its bill until the fish stopped moving; it then tore off and ate pieces. Carrion Crows have previously been noted taking food from water (*Brit. Birds* 40: 158, 245; 41: 278; 44: 323; 49: 91) and diving feet-first into water after fish (69: 273), but the crow at Filey seemed to be driving the fish across the rock pool until it was in a position to be caught. The crow's repeated unsuccessful stabs into the water could indicate that it had not made allowances for the refraction of light and therefore could not estimate the position of the fish until it was restricted to a small area.

P. J. DUNN

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Letters

A possible reason why pigeons and other birds sometimes swim The note by D. E. Ladhams on the infrequency of observations of pigeons (*Columbidae*) swimming, and his comment that the reason for this behaviour is puzzling (*Brit. Birds* 74: 265), prompts the following.

I have already recorded an instance of a Stock Dove *Columba oenas* alighting on water (*Brit. Birds* 40: 254). Although I had no proof, the dove(s) may well have had eggs. More interestingly, on 9th July 1945, at Giza, Egypt, an adult Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* left its nest in the top of a large tree and settled in the centre of the lake, where it stayed for about one minute before flying back to its nest. From the heron's behaviour, I am almost certain that its nest contained eggs, rather than young. It is possible that the moisture carried back to the nest was beneficial in cooling the eggs: the day was very hot, with maximum recorded shade temperature of 102°F (38°C).

THE LATE C. A. WHITE

Dr C. H. Fry has commented as follows: 'It is possible that, in hot weather, incubating birds may feel the need for greater relief in cooling the brood patch, with its highly vascularised skin, than the clutch can provide.' Eds

Call of Pallid Swift Several published sources (mostly German) were consulted in the course of preparing the 'Voice' account of Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* for volume 4 of *BWP*. These sources agree in describing the so-called 'scream' of Pallid as lower pitched and not as shrill as that of Swift *A. apus*; this is contra the suggestion of D. J. Burges (*Brit. Birds* 76: 350), but supports that made more recently by D. Ladbroke and J. Smart (*Brit. Birds* 77: 217). A number of the descriptions do, however, support D. J. Burges's claim that the call of Pallid tends to be disyllabic. Renderings include 'srieh', 'tschriih' (rasping and nasal), 'seeeyrr' and, from P. A. D. Hollom, 'see-ye'r'. Particularly valuable for clarifying the comparison with Swift is the account of Bergmann & Helb (1982), whose sonagrams clearly show the difference in pitch between the two species.

Bergmann & Helb's excellent book, for which there is neither English

translation, nor British equivalent, deserves the attention of ornithologists interested in resolving similar questions of how closely related species may differ in their vocalisations.

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REFERENCE

BERGMANN, H.-H., & HELB, H.-W. 1982. *Stimmen der Vögel Europas*. Munich.

We have also received a note from D. Brown and J. Brown concerning their observation in Mallorca that a Pallid Swift gave distinctly lower and more disyllabic calls than had three Swifts heard immediately before. This difference now seems to be established. EDS

Requests for reprints May I reply to the letter from P. Marsh (*Brit. Birds* 77: 216)? The use of printed postcards has become standard usage for requesting reprints on the Continent. Most of us welcome these cards, because we appreciate the time saved through their use.

The mere publication of a paper, note or other contribution does not lead to requests for copies. This happens only after reviews in one of the abstracting services. I trust that anyone making such requests is seriously interested in some aspect of the publication, and I believe that the author of any published report should be quite happy to supply a copy, whether this is a reprint, a photocopy or even a copy of the whole publication.

Of course P. Marsh can expect all serious British ornithologists and birders to be subscribers to *British Birds*, but can you truly expect all Europeans to subscribe to *BB*? Even all institutions cannot subscribe to all publications. Whether or not they take *BB* will depend on how close the work of the institute is to ornithology. Most of the requests from institute addresses are not from permanent workers, but from 'poor' students.

I support your statement about helping the Eastern Europeans: because of currency restrictions, swapping is the only way for them to obtain Western material. But even in the West, bartering and swapping is the only way to obtain a broad literature coverage. When British ornithologists learn to use this possibility of obtaining papers we may well find that they will quote European papers much more often than they do at present. I hope that the majority of the people who write in *BB* are willing to fulfil requests for copies in the future.

ALISTAIR HILL

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As one of Britain's most prolific authors, P. J. Grant gives a differing viewpoint on behalf of the Editorial Board:

I have now had over 70 requests for reprints of the paper on stint identification (*Brit. Birds* 77: 293-315). I am given only a few free authors' copies, but can purchase further copies (at a reduced authors' rate). Currently, it would cost me at least £1.30 (Europe) or £2.07 (USA) to send each reprint. I do not think that *British Birds* should recommend to authors that requests are fulfilled, or imply it, unless it is also willing to supply all the free copies. It is a very difficult area; I have personally, however, never written to an author for a reprint, probably because I know the trouble and expense this can entail. Instead, I go to a specialist library (or occasionally write to one, if it offers a photocopy service). With *British Birds* it is easy: a back issue can be purchased, so no one need ever request a reprint from the author.

Alistair Hill has recommended, perhaps tongue in cheek, that we in Britain should request reprints more often. I would rather that someone was suggesting that the habit be banned, and that researchers should be encouraged to use their own initiatives—and cash—to obtain copies. That would cut the demand down to those who really cannot obtain copies in any other way (e.g. those in Eastern Europe).

P. J. GRANT

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Announcements

Christmas Whisky Puzzle We received 46 correct solutions to the competition set on page xv of the December 1984 issue.

The correct answers to the puzzle were:

Whitethroat

(‘what’ surrounding ‘it or the’ jumbled)

Avocet

(‘ova’ turned, followed by ‘CET’)

Linnet

(‘let’ with ‘inn’ inside)

Dipper

(‘pp’ with rearranged ‘ride’ outside)

Robin

(‘RN’ around ‘Obi’, from Obi-Wan Kenobi of *Star Wars*)

Aquatic Warbler

(far too easy)

Pintail

(‘ail’ after ‘pint’)

Pheasant

(‘peasant’ with ‘H’ inserted)

The first letters spell WALDRAPP, the old name for the Bald Ibis, which nests in Morocco and Turkey.

The winner, who provided the first correct answer opened on 10th January, was J. M. Pinder of Huddersfield. He will by now have received his prize: a bottle of *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky, donated by Matthew Gloag & Son Ltd, the sponsors of the annual ‘Bird Photograph of the Year’ competition.



Birds of southern Africa in colour A new book, *Ian Sinclair's Field Guide to the Birds of Southern Africa*, is due to be published by Collins later this month. This 360-page guide includes over 850 colour photographs (usually six to a page), with a few colour paintings to fill in the gaps of species for which good photographs are unavailable. It covers the whole of Africa south of the Zambesi (and the islands south to Antarctica). As a photo-reference, this book will also be much-valued outside the area covered, for it includes many species that are migrants or vagrants elsewhere, including Europe. *British Birds* subscribers can obtain it (post free in UK & Eire) from British BirdShop. Books ordered now will be despatched immediately that stocks become available.

'BWP' reminder Volume IV of *Birds of the Western Palearctic* is still available, price £60, post free to subscribers in the UK & Eire, through British BirdShop (see page xiii).

£30 off 'BWP I-IV'. AN EXCLUSIVE OFFER TO 'BB' SUBSCRIBERS. The usual cost of the first four volumes of *BWP* is £55 + £55 + £55 + £60 = £225. As well as receiving them post free (in UK & Eire), *BB* subscribers can obtain these four volumes for £195, saving a total of £30, if ordered through British BirdShop (see page xiii).

Requests

Colour-marked and wing-tagged Eiders The Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group is studying the local and long-distance movements of Eiders *Somateria mollissima* by marking the males: the white plumage is dyed yellow, a yellow darvic tag is fixed on the right wing, with a code of either one or two black letters. The yellow dye should persist until June. Anybody seeing a 'yellow' Eider is asked to note the location, date, time of day, number and sex of any accompanying Eiders, the letter code on the right wing and, if applicable, the direction of flight taken. Information should be sent to Martin Heubeck, 3 Lighthouse Buildings, Breiwick Road, Lerwick, Shetland; telephone Lerwick (0595) 4028.

Colour-marked birds: a reminder In general, we do not publish separate requests on this subject (there are too many local studies to include them all). If you see a bird marked in some way (other than with ordinary BTO rings), please report it as follows:

WADERS: Wader Study Group, Dr Dave Townshend, Zoology Department, Durham University, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE.

GUILLS: Gull Study Group, Dr John Coulson, Zoology Department, Durham University, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE.

SWANS AND GEESE (except Canada Geese): Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire GL2 7BT.

ALL OTHER SPECIES: Kevin Baker, BTO, Beech Grove, Station Road, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

Although colour marking may be used in purely local studies (e.g. of behaviour), in the majority of cases studies of marked populations depend upon co-operation from all observers who sight the marked individuals.

'Why hasn't my January issue arrived?' The majority of *BB* subscribers start their subscription with the January issue. Processing each resubscription takes a long time (even in these days of computers, envelopes still have to be opened, the contents read, addresses checked, payments entered, and so on). For this reason, we ask subscribers to resubscribe before the end of the year, and many do so in August and September, which is an enormous help to us. Direct Debit payments are also a great help, for the paperwork can be done in advance.

We usually produce address labels in the middle of the previous month, ready for despatch on the last Thursday of the month or the first Thursday of the month of the issue. To allow as many subscribers as possible to be entered on the computer list for the January issue, however, we do not start to print the January labels until about 7th January, for despatch (this year) on 10th January.

Every year, several hundred subscribers do not send in their resubscriptions until the very end of December or in early January. We trust that the details set out above will explain to them why their January issue arrived in a hand-written envelope at the end of the month instead of in a computer-addressed envelope in mid month.

We do try to give a good and efficient service, but do need co-operation to assist us to achieve this. We thank you in advance for your help next year.

Birds of Upper Volta Bird records from Upper Volta (Burkina since August 1984) will be welcomed for a summary of current knowledge. Names of correspondents will be acknowledged in the published text. Please send details to Yves Thonnérieux, Centre Ornithologique Rhône-Alpes, Biologie Animale et Zoologie, Université Lyon 1, 43 Bd du 11 novembre 1918, 69 622 Villeurbanne Cedex, France.

Readership survey What do you dislike about *BB*? What do you like? We need to find out readers' wishes so that we can adjust the contents of the journal to maintain or improve its popularity and value. Please help us to give you the journal that you want. Please fill in the questionnaire on page xi and send to the editorial office by 30th March 1985. Thank you.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Gambian tragedy Three Midlands bird-watchers were among four people who died when a river-boat hit a sand bank in the Gambia River and overturned in early December. They were John Baldwin, who was honorary warden of the Brandon Marsh reserve near Coventry, and Brian and Janet Wright, who were organisers of many RSPB activities in the Midlands. Brian had served as a member of RSPB Council, and was one of the innovators of the highly successful network of RSPB local members' groups, forming and leading the Coventry group which was only the second in the country. This tragedy has robbed birdwatching in the Midlands of three of its keenest workers, and we offer our condolences to their relatives and many friends.

In recent years, the Gambia has become an increasingly popular destination for British birdwatchers, and the 300-km, four-day trip up the river aboard the *Lady Chilel Jawara* was undoubtedly the highlight of any visit. Among the 100 passengers on this ill-fated journey were about another 20 British birdwatchers, including such well-known names as Dave Farrow, Tim and Carol Inskipp, Carl Nicholson (RSPB Midlands Regional Officer), Mick and Win Rogers (Portland Bird Observatory) and Ray and Janet Turley. The survivors sat on the upturned hull for 6½ hours before rescue came, and we are thankful that so many came safely through this enormous ordeal. (*Contributed by PJG*)

National status for Gib Point In November 1984, the NCC declared Gibraltar Point—over 400 ha of seashore, sand-dunes and fresh and salt water marshes on the Lincolnshire side of the Wash—as a National Nature Reserve. The reserve is leased by the Lincolnshire and South Humberside Trust for Nature Conservation, principally from Lincolnshire County Council and East Lindsey District Council, who have welcomed this initiative. Gibraltar Point is an internationally important site for wildlife and was the first statutory Local Nature Reserve in Britain, originally established in 1952.

The reserve has a thriving visitor centre, with an exhibition and classrooms, residential field station and bird observatory managed by the Trust. Almost the whole area is open to access by the public. Important research on coastal physiography, sand-dune and saltmarsh vegetation and bird migration have been in progress since 1948. The sandy beaches are one of the few regular nesting places on the Lincolnshire coast for Little Terns *Sterna albibrons* and Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula*, whilst the marshes and scrub—mostly sea-buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides*—hold a high breeding population of small birds. The spring and autumn migrations bring in great numbers of birds on passage, including many rarities, and in winter Shore Larks *Eremophila alpestris*, Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris*, Redwings *T. iliacus*, Twites *Carduelis flavirostris*, Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis* and other

northern migrants feed within the reserve. The sand-pits and dune ridges provide a roost at high tide for many thousands of waders which fly in from the Wash.

Swanwick '84 It almost goes without saying that the BTO Annual Conference, held in 1984, as usual, at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire, from 30th November to 2nd December, was a roaring success. The varied programme kept all enthralled, and socialising between sessions and into the night made it a thoroughly enjoyable weekend for all. On Friday evening, John Mather gave an entertaining and very amusing description of a bird-watching journey through India, 'Bharatpur to Barun', illustrated by many excellent slides. Saturday started with Dr Stephen Baillie detailing some of the information gained from ringing seabirds throughout Europe, revealing that many populations have discrete breeding and wintering or dispersal areas; the significance of this for understanding the effects of sea pollution being underlined. James Hancock (the BTO's new President) then described his impressions and reminiscences of the birds of three wetland areas, in Florida, Indonesia and China, emphasising the rapid and drastic reductions to these and other such areas worldwide and the consequent effects on birds. The 16th Witherby Memorial Lecture, on 'Imprinting in young birds', was given by Dr Patrick Bateson. He showed that imprinting can go beyond the stage of knowing a parent to the recognition of siblings too. This results in siblings not being chosen as mates; mates are, however, usually similar to siblings. In the afternoon, films were followed by BTO progress reports on the Birds of Estuaries Enquiry, Nest Record Scheme and a new project, jointly run with the Game Conservancy, on Song Birds and Cereals.

Conversation, drinking and dancing at the disco into the small hours may have caused a few to miss the first talks on Sunday morning. If so, they missed a treat, for there were two superb presentations. The first was a brilliant set of photographs taken, and wittily commented upon, by Mike Wilkes, and the second a series of quite exceptional sound recordings made and described by Richard Margoschis. The conference ended with a splendid report on birdwatching in the Scottish Highlands by Roy Dennis. He outlined the problems and delights of birdwatching in a superb and rugged part of

Britain. Forty people entered the *BB* Mystery Photographs Competition, but only one correctly identified all the birds: Dorian Buffery won the applause of all present, as well as the bottle of champagne.

National bird for Denmark An election organised by Danish Television, attracting 233,635 voters, has chosen the Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* as Denmark's national bird. No doubt Hans Anderson's well-known fairy tale, *The Ugly Duckling*, had a determining influence. The Mute Swan has been protected since 1926 in Denmark. Some ornithologists would have preferred the Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, as it is seriously threatened in Denmark. (*Council of Europe Newsletter* no. 84-10).

Another Big Bird Race We have just received from Clive Viney details of Hong Kong's own Big Bird Race. It appears to have been a resounding success, since over £3,000 was raised by the event, the proceeds going towards the construction of a new hide overlooking a tidal mangrove-fringed bay on the WWF reserve at Mai Po. Two teams, each of four observers, represented WWF Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. The race was run on 7th April 1984, between 00.00 and 21.00 hours. Apart from winning, each team was very keen to beat the one-day record of 110 species. This they both did, and most handsomely. The winners, WWF HK, ended the day with 124, and the HK Bird Watchers with 118. The list of birds seen makes interesting reading, as many species well known to us, such as Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* and Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, are mixed with others, such as Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*, White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*, Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum cruentatum* and so on . . .! *Hong Kong's Own Big Bird Race* is a booklet giving a lively account of the event, including an interesting introduction, full checklists and illustrations, and blow-by-blow descriptions of the day's events from the respective viewpoints of the two team captains. It can be obtained (price HK\$50, including postage, which is just over £5) from WWF HK Office, 1005 Wing on Life Building, 22A Des Voeux Road C, Hong Kong.



59. Watching a Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, Tresco, Scilly, October 1984 (Royston K. Coles)



60. About 150 birders looking for the Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1984 (note the observers on the skyline as well as those in the foreground) (Royston K. Coles)

Images of Scilly For those who do not visit the Isles of Scilly in autumn, we present here a picture of the social events at various sites of rare birds; for those who do visit Scilly, we hope that plates 59-62 will bring back happy memories of autumn 1984.

Beware: vultures! We have received the following note by K. W. Sanderson, originally written for the summer/autumn 1984 *Newsletter* of the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society. No further comment is necessary.

'On 7th April, 1982, I was bird-watching on a coastal road near Zahara de los Atunes, to the west of Tarifa on the Straits of Gibraltar. Shortly before noon, I drove

round a bend and saw a Griffon Vulture [*Gyps fulvus*] lying on the road. It was fully grown but still in its beautiful brown juvenile plumage. Its breast was on the road with its wings stretched backwards and I thought it had a broken wing. I stopped the car some twenty yards away and took a photograph. It got to its feet and approached me. I realised it must be a tame bird. It came right up to me and took hold of the leather tongue of my shoe giving it a good tug. With the tip of its beak it pulled at my sock but did not like it. It tried to put its head and neck up my trouser leg. I felt this was going too far and retreated to my car. It followed me. It took the front number plate in its beak and gave it a good shake, breaking one of the plastic bolts



61. New to the Scilly scene in 1984: the use of CB radio ensures that as many as possible learn as soon as possible of the discovery of a rarity. David Hunt, Scilly, October 1984
(David Hunt)

holding it on. It put its head under the car into the heart (or guts?) of the engine. Again, this seemed to be going too far, so I put my foot gently on its back and pushed. It stood its ground and pushed me back, catching me off balance on one leg. Clearly, it had inherited instincts to fend for itself when at a carcass.

"I retreated and put my camera in the back of the car. My umbrella was there, so I seized it and, with a cry of "On guard!", I advanced in a military manner. It retreated a few yards, allowing me to jump into the driver's seat and turn the ignition key. No ignition! Opening the bonnet I saw gleaming copper where the insulation had been torn off, and several broken wires. While I was bending over the engine wondering which ends matched, the vulture sidled up behind me but was kept at bay by several backward kicks. A car arrived and stopped to watch this ridiculous sight. In broken Spanish I explained to the driver that the vulture had put my car out of action. This was accepted without question as a natural event, and he remarked that the vulture belonged to a nearby villa. Together we joined various wires until we got a combination which allowed the engine to start.

62. Looking for the Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1984
(David Hunt)



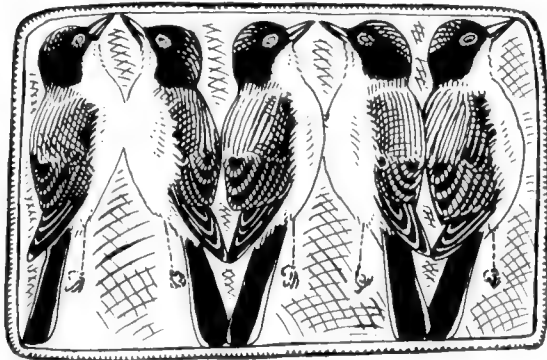
'The following morning I noticed a small leak from my radiator. Eventually I returned to Scotland, topping up the radiator at intervals. My local garage found that the brazing of a small pipe at the bottom of the radiator was cracked and replaced the radiator.

'You are hereby warned to watch for car-wrecking tame vultures!'

RSPCA as a source of bird records Needing to film storm-driven seabirds, I asked the RSPCA to alert their inspectors and phone me should any waifs turn up. Within a week (in September 1984), I was advised of a Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* in Kidderminster (19th), a young Puffin *Fratercula arctica* near Sloane Square (22nd) and a dead Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* from Purley (deep frozen since 1983!). My ad. in *BB* (September p. xx) brought only one bird to light, a Manx Shearwater at Rhandirmwyn, Dyfed, on 17th. Do county bird recorders keep regularly in touch with their local RSPCA inspectors? The Society's headquarters' phone number is Horsham (0403) 64181. (Contributed by Jeffery Boswall)

We don't like to brag, but... The *BB* office was telephoned today (3rd December) by a *BB* subscriber asking 'Why hasn't my December issue arrived yet?' At the time, we were opening the day's mail, including the latest number of a national journal that shall remain nameless. The issue in question was for May-June 1984!

Bird names explained



Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (Brett Westwood)

Third international identification meeting Following the successful get-togethers in Eilat, Israel, and Falsterbo, Sweden, in October-November 1981 and August-September 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 96-97, plates 35 & 36), a third meeting was held, in Santa Barbara, California, USA, in January 1983 (plate 63). The increasing co-operation which now takes place between identification experts is proving to be a great help in resolving many problems: the rare bird in one country is the commonplace in another.

New Swiss checklist Part 1 (Passeriformes) of the first 'official' checklist for Switzerland, compiled by Raffael Winkler, has just been published as supplement 5 to *Orn. Beob.* In German, with a French summary of the introduction, it is based on data to the end of 1983, plus some from 1984. Sequence and nomenclature follow Voous. Particularly useful are the general comments on status, distribution and movements (altitudinal included, naturally!), numbers and dates, and migration peaks (with some histograms). The emphasis is on migrants and winter visitors, though additional breeding developments since the Swiss atlas (1980) are also noted. Rarity occurrences are detailed in full. If you haven't been to Switzerland, you should go—with this list. Part 2, covering non-passerines, is expected at the end of 1986. *Avifauna der Schweiz, eine kommentierte Artenliste. 1. Passeriformes* is available, price Swiss FR 15.00, from Schweizerische Vogelwarte, CH-6204 Sempach, Switzerland. (Contributed by DAC)

The things they say! Andrew Middleton has sent us this account of a conversation which occurred on a visit to watch the evening roost of Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* on Steart Island, Somerset.

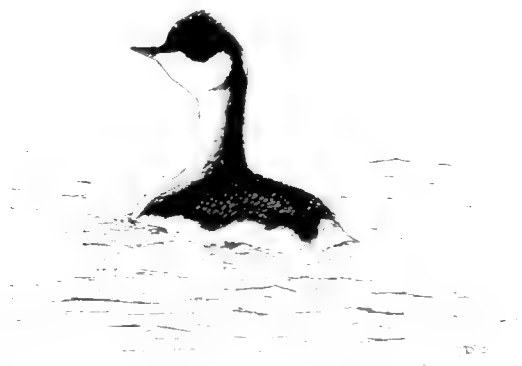
The first bird was located feeding in a meadow. The birder who found it 'scoped it up' and gave the rest of us directions. 'It's just behind the rear legs of that cow'. We searched the field, but could find no cows, only horses. On pointing this out to him, the finder looked over his scope and was forced to agree with us. 'I'm sorry,' he said, 'I'm not very good on mammals'.

Congratulations to Peter (YOC) and Sue (formerly British BirdShop) Holden on the birth in November of their second son, James. Their other son, Andrew (aged 26 months), is now up to the level of Pied Wagtail identification.



63. International identification meeting, California, USA, January 1983. Left to right: Kenn Kaufman and Davis W. Finch (USA), Lasse Laine (Finland), P. J. Grant (UK), Will Russell and Jon Dunn (USA), Killian Mullarney (Republic of Ireland), Stuart Tingley (Canada), Arnoud van den Berg (Netherlands), Lars Jonsson (Sweden) and Gerald Oreel (Netherlands). (Guy McCaskie and Joe Morlan, both USA, had departed before this photograph was taken) (*Arnoud van den Berg*)

Recent reports



Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

The dates in this report refer to December 1984 unless otherwise stated. The month began with mild, unsettled, westerly weather, followed after 8th by a settled period as pressure rose to the south and east. Foggy and dull conditions persisted with lower temperatures until 19th, when the

westerlies returned. Colder northerly air arriving on 26th brought a sprinkling of snow and a small hard-weather movement of **Lapwings** *Vanellus vanellus* over Hilton (Cambridgeshire), with 675 an hour west on 29th. Settled, mainly dull, cool days finished the year.

Wildfowl

An adult **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* found with Brent Geese *B. bernicla* at Grainthorpe (Lincolnshire) on 25th November, and again at Saltfleet (Lincolnshire) from 27th to 30th November, might perhaps be last winter's Norfolk bird returned, but where is it lurking now? An adult dark-bellied **Brent Goose** *B. b. bernicla* at Echnaloch (Orkney) on 23rd was unusual there. Brent Geese of the Nearctic/Siberian race *nigricans*, known as 'Black Brants', occurred throughout the month at Cley (Norfolk) and on Jersey (Channel Islands). A small **Canada Goose** *B. canadensis* found late in the month with Greenland White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons flavirostris* near Stranraer (Dumfries & Galloway) was probably a genuine vagrant. Also of interest was a flock of seven Greenland **White-fronted Geese** seen on Walney Island (Cumbria) sporadically through the month. All the reported **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* were in Scotland, with four at Embo (Highland), a male in Sinclairs Bay, north of Wick (Highland), and a first-winter male in St Andrews Bay (Fife) on 9th. The usual **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* was at Embo/Loch Fleet. Male **American Wigeons** *Anas americana* returned to Ringstead (Northamptonshire) from November, and the Avon Valley (Hampshire), as did the **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* to Loch Insh (Highland); there was also one at Tamar Lake (Cornwall). A female **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* visited Loch of Harray (Orkney) from 23rd November to at least mid month, and two males were present all month at Rutland Water (Leicestershire). This reservoir held the highest-ever British count of **Gadwalls** *A. strepera* in November, with 1,059, and 65 **Goosanders** *Mergus merganser* there on 4th were also notable. A good scattering of **Smews** *M. albellus* included one at Echnaloch from November to 23rd, and one observer had the good fortune to have redhead **Smew**, **Goosander** and **Red-breasted Merganser** *M. serrator* in his scope together at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 2nd. A count of 2,620 **Pintails** *A. acuta* at Grange-over-Sands (Cumbria) on 10th was a record for that locality. Five **Ferruginous Ducks** *A. nyroca* reported were all in the west, including a female in Ireland, on Strangford Lough (Co. Down) on 30th.

Seabirds

Filey (North Yorkshire) had a number of

unseasonal visitors passing, with a **Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis* south on 1st, a **Sooty Shearwater** *P. griseus* the next day, and **Manx Shearwaters** *P. puffinus* of the race *maurelanicus*, known as 'Balearic Shearwater', on 1st and 17th; on the last date, 1,138 **Fulmars** *Fulmarus glacialis* flew south. Bird of the month, however, must be the **Capped Petrel** *Pterodroma hasitata* picked up dead south of Bridlington (Humberside), the only previous British record being as long ago as March or April 1850, and thus the longest unrecorded extant British bird!

White-billed Divers *Gavia adamsii* were seen off Burray (Orkney) on 18th and 19th, and, oiled, in Sinclairs Bay. The usual scatter of inland divers were mostly **Great Northern** *G. immer*; **Red-necked Grebes** *Podiceps grisegena* also showed well, and there were the usual **Black-necked Grebes** *P. nigricollis*. The **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* was still elusive but present at Ogwen Pool (Gwynedd) to at least 8th. A scattering of **Little Auks** *Alle alle* included one on Christmas Day on Blakeney Point (Norfolk). Perhaps more unusual at this season was a **Puffin** *Fratercula arctica* on Walney Island on 8th.

Wading birds

A long-staying **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* in the Skipton (West Yorkshire) area was still around, as was the River Yealm (Devon) **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*, at least one **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* in Co. Wexford, and a **Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* in Norfolk. A **Crane** *Grus grus* was seen at Bridlington, and seven adults passed over North Slob (Co. Wexford) on 24th November.

A **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* at Chew Valley Lake on 1st and 2nd was late, as were claimed **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus tricolor* at Davidstow (Cornwall) around 20th November, and on the Isle of Wight. Less unusual were two **Grey Phalaropes** *P. fulicarius* on the Isle of Wight, and singletons at Grange-over-Sands from 9th to at least 29th, Jersey from 8th to 10th, Filey on 24th, and Ogston Reservoir (Derbyshire) on 1st. A movement of **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* took place on 2nd, when 13 appeared at Staines Reservoir (Surrey), and 19 spent the day on Newtown Marsh (Isle of Wight). A count of 17 **Green Sandpipers** *Tringa ochropus* near Basingstoke (Hampshire) on 8th was high, and **Jack Snipes** *Limnocryptes minimus* were reported to be more widespread than usual in Cumbria.

Nearctic waders which had clearly settled down for the winter were **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* at Frampton and Slimbridge (Gloucestershire), and **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* near Plymouth (Devon).

Gulls, terns and skuas

The **Thurso** (Highland) **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* also seems set for the winter, being present into the New Year. The lack of cold weather perhaps accounted, however, for very few reports of white-winged gulls, though the faithful New Brighton (Merseyside) **Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucoideus* reappeared for yet another winter. It was joined by a **Mediterranean Gull** *L. melanocephalus*; others, all adults, appeared inland at Stanton Harcourt (Oxfordshire) on 2nd, Wrecclesham (Surrey) on 3rd and Little Paxton (Cambridgeshire) on 16th. The **Laughing Gulls** *L. atricilla* at Newcastle (Tyne & Wear) and Hull (Humberside) (plate 66) prolonged their stays, but a fresh individual, a first-winter bird, put in a brief appearance at Rostherne Mere (Cheshire) on 9th. Six reports of **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* were all in the west except for Jersey's first record on 30th November.

A **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* on Jersey on 12th was not too surprising; not so the **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* which graced Eyebrook Reservoir (Leicestershire) on 8th. The **Great Skua** *Stercorarius skua* reported last month from Stewarby (Bedfordshire) left there on 30th November and was seen later that same day at both Sywell and Pitsford Reservoirs (Northamptonshire). A juvenile **Pomarine Skua** *S. pomarinus* was watched at rest and in flight at Clevedon (Avon) on 2nd.



Birds of prey

There were a few more reports of **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* this month,

including an adult and juvenile together in Derwent Dale (Derbyshire), and, on 1st, one near Newtown (Isle of Wight). Also on the Isle of Wight were **Goshawks** *Accipiter gentilis* on 2nd and again on 15th and 16th, while a **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* passed over Ampthill (Bedfordshire) on 17th. The biggest surprise, however, was a **Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* near Evesham (Hereford & Worcester) on 4th.

Passerines

Unseasonal summer migrants continued to straggle into December. In Shetland, **Olive-backed Pipits** *Anthus hodgsoni* appeared on Fair Isle on 12th November, and at Kergord on 20th November. There were **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus* in Humberside and in Lancashire (plates 67 & 68). A **Willow Warbler** *P. trochilus* with a roving tit flock at Billinge (Greater Manchester) on 24th and 25th November must have thought it was a **Chiffchaff** *P. collybita*, for good numbers of this latter species were encouraged by the weather to stay through the month in Central England. There were **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava* at Benacre (Suffolk) and Buckenham (Norfolk) at the start of the month, and two **House Martins** *Delichon urbica* at Titchwell (Norfolk) on 1st. Less unexpected were **Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* at Hodbarrow (Cumbria) on 1st and St Andrews on 7th, but quite exceptional were **Swifts** *Apus apus* at Portland (Dorset) on 3rd and New Maldon (Surrey) on 7th and 9th, in addition to three further November reports.

Winter visitors were generally in lower numbers than usual, although 150 **Lapland Buntings** *Calcarius lapponicus* at Burnham Norton (Norfolk), and high numbers of **Snow Buntings** *Plectrophenax nivalis* (plate 69) on both east and west coasts of Britain are worthy of note. The largest gathering of **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* reported was nine at Thurso, and there were odd birds down the east side of Britain. A **Dartford Warbler** *Sylvia undata* in Bushy Park (Greater London) was a turn-up, but the only long-distance vagrants were a **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* at Duncrue Street Marsh, Belfast, all month (plates 64 & 65) suspiciously close to Belfast Docks.²—and a male **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* at Freswick Bay (Highland) from 26th into January; though a belated report of a **Lesser Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella rufescens* at Spurn (Humberside) on 14th November would, if accepted, be the first for Britain rather than Ireland.



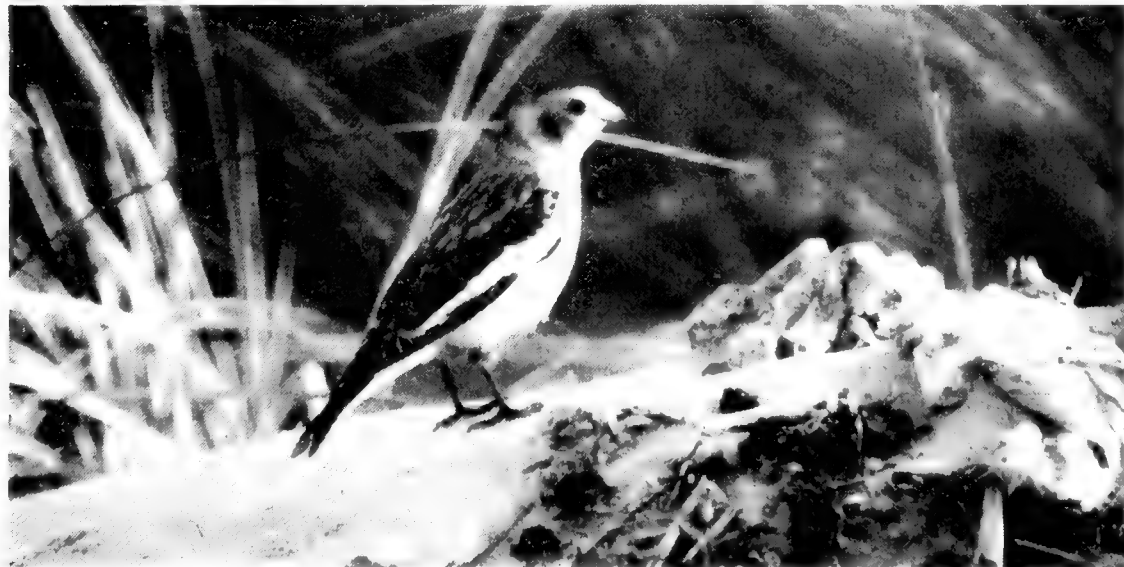
64 & 65. White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Northern Ireland, December 1984
(Andrew V. Moon)



66. Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*, Humber-side, November/December 1984 (Paul Hill)

67 & 68. Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, Lancashire, December 1984
(Steve Young)

69. Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*, Merseyside, December 1984 (Steve Young)



VAT on books?

We sincerely hope that it is unfounded, but the rumour is that VAT will be applied to books (and probably also periodicals) in the next Budget. Readers contemplating buying an expensive book (or several books) might be advised to do so before Budget Day, 'just in case'. If VAT is applied, it may prove to be necessary for us to ask for this additional payment for books not paid for by Budget Day.

Reviews

Bird Navigation: the solution of a mystery? By R. Robin Baker. Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1984. 256 pages. Paperback, £9.75.

This book fills for the birdwatcher of the 1980s the niche which G.V.T. Matthews's pioneer *Bird Navigation* filled in the 1950s and 1960s. It is vastly informative and thoughtfully provocative. It is also a little daunting, for the number of jigsaw pieces to be fitted together seems to have quadrupled in the last two decades.

One of the largest conceptual advances has been that of 'redundancy of information', first put forward by Professor Keeton in 1972. In short, migrating birds have at their disposal a range of back-up navigational systems. Thus, in addition to their ability to determine direction from sun and stars, we now know that some species can make use of scent patterns, of infrasound, and particularly of elements of the earth's magnetic field. Some can also detect polarised light patterns and may use these and/or a sensitivity to ultra-violet light during daylight hours.

The research summarised is almost all based on experimentation, it being difficult at present to see any alternative approach. Yet to prove that a pigeon (by far the most commonly used experimental animal) can detect some subtle environmental variant is not to establish that it exploits its ability to any significant extent. Twenty-five years ago, radar workers were recording migrants completely disoriented by cloud or fog, and the author cites a similar event (p. 218). On such occasions, why cannot the birds use their back-up system? We must be grateful to the experimenters, who have made virtually all the discoveries of the last two decades. Yet, in connection with the way that they interpret some of their results, I find myself wondering how many of them have that degree of experience of wild migrating birds as would come with two mid-autumn weeks at almost any bird observatory.

In chapters 10 and 11, the author offers his interpretation of how birds find the way: by means of 'a familiar area map based on a rich and varied landscape ... and a variety of efficient compasses'. I accept that a mosaic of familiar areas plays a role, but suspect that Robin Baker exaggerates, or attaches too much importance to, the role of pre-migratory juvenile wandering. In this, perhaps he has been too much influenced by his interest in the Lesser Black-backed Gull and the Sand Martin. I do not think that there is much comparable evidence for the typical long-haul passerine night-migrants.

This reasonably-priced book takes us nearer than ever to an understanding of how birds find their way. If you are intrigued by bird migration, do read it. It cannot fail to stimulate you.

ROBERT SPENCER

Bird Island: pictures from a shoal of sand. By Lars Jonsson. Croom Helm, London, 1984. 96 pages; over 60 colour illustrations. £16.95.

During the last few years, Lars Jonsson has had quite an impact on the bird world. His series of five field guides to European birds, which first appeared in his native Sweden, have been enthusiastically received in this country and worldwide. His reputation as an artist is now international, and his work in the field of bird identification has gained him considerable respect from the ornithological establishment and birdwatchers alike. Indeed, I believe he has set new standards in bird illustration.

'Bird Island' strikes a different note. It is essentially a series of personal impressions resulting from two months' observations in the summer of 1981. His island is an ephemeral thing—a 'shoal of sand' rising from the sea off the coast of Sweden for a few brief summer months. During its 'life', it provides a home for breeding terns, plovers, Avocets and

Oystercatchers, and feeding and resting places for many other birds. Watching the pattern of life in this small community, Lars Jonsson became inspired by the whole essence of the place. Indeed, he confesses 'it took on almost religious values for me!' His emotional involvement is evident in his writing, which in the earlier chapters I found flowery and rather difficult to take. As I read on, however, I found that my initial reservations were largely lost: maybe I too was becoming 'bewitched'—under the spell of this little place and its birds.

But this is essentially a book of pictures, pencil and watercolour sketches, large, evocative and full of life. I came to this book a confirmed fan, and I remain so. The character of most of the drawings is more free and washy than his more familiar illustrative style, but this suits the mood of the book well. His facility for capturing the 'jizz' of his birds is to be envied: his portrayal of the quintessential Ringed Plover fills me with admiration. There is always light in his pictures, whether it is the pinkish back-lighting on the water's edge where the birds feed at dusk, or the hot white haze rising from the surface of the sand in the July day, making the birds look ethereal and ghostly. If you half shut your eyes, you can feel the heat . . .

It is sadly rare that such sensitivity, perceptiveness of form, and dazzling ability to draw are combined in one person. There is no doubt in my mind that Lars Jonsson is already one of the 'greats' of bird art, and his career still stretches ahead of him. This is a large-format book, attractively designed and presented. Many of the pictures are, to my mind, reproduced a little too large to be easy on the eye in book form: I found myself holding the book at arm's length, or standing back, in order to appreciate some of the paintings. Several of those occupying double-page spreads have birds crossing the gutter, splitting them in half, and very much detracting from one's enjoyment of the picture. But this is a minor irritation in a book of considerable charm and a great deal of soul.

HILARY BURN

Ocean Birds: their breeding, biology and behaviour. By **Lars Löfgren**. Croom Helm, Beckenham, 1984. 240 pages; 4 watercolour paintings; 200 colour photographs; numerous line-drawings. £16.95.

This is an extremely attractive book. The Pacific Gull in close-up is one of the most impressive recent covers I have seen, and the photography inside is even better. Indeed, the selection of photographs, all by the author, can rarely have been equalled and never bettered. I particularly liked the flight shots, especially a Leach's Petrel at sea, a close up of a Franklin's Gull, and two frigatebirds chasing a screaming tropicbird. Still my favourite was a Kittiwake colony on a Swedish navigation marker. Oh to study such a group of birds nesting from the basal stones to the top of the pole! The book is worth the price for the plates alone.

The text is divided into eight chapters, covering most aspects of seabirds (and the title is a complete misnomer)—evolution, classification, 'properties of seabirds', species, migration, ecology, behaviour, and interactions with man. These are illustrated with many maps and diagrams, many of which are needlessly complicated. The line-drawings and paintings lose out badly to the photos. The author is well read, up-to-date and obviously understands seabird ecology and theory. Like some other recent books, sources of material are not given, so that the text cannot live up to two of its publicity claims: to be authoritative and an invaluable addition to the literature. When will such writers realise the folly in this approach: they get little credit, and yet suffer from the published mistakes of others. I think I found some errors—or were they? Do Cape Gannets and Guillemots really start breeding when two years old? I doubt it; still, maybe they do. Have many crowded gannetries remained, as claimed, at the same size for decades, despite the enormous increase in the total population? I cannot just accept such statements when I see that the Rhinoceros Auklet is classified with the smaller auklets, and not with the puffins where it undoubtedly belongs. I want to check interesting possibilities, but without a lead reference I cannot. In general, however, the standard of accuracy is commendably high.

In places the text is awkward and hideous jargon appears. For instance, 'Given the fact that seabirds need land for breeding, their choice of a place can be divided into three stages. The first involves selection of an ecological habitat and of some position in an ecosystem during breeding. Secondly, a macroscopical location must be found such as an island, steep cliff or mountain top.' A more direct approach would have been better. Some difficulties may be a result of translation. It is a shame that this text was not vetted by a seabird biologist whose first language was English. Despite this, the book is a useful addition to my bookshelf.

MIKE HARRIS

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British Birds

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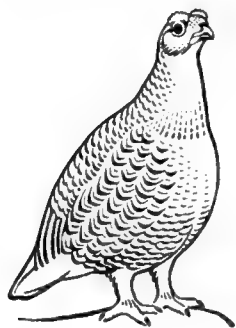
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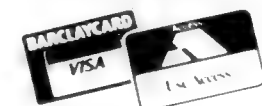
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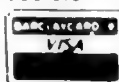
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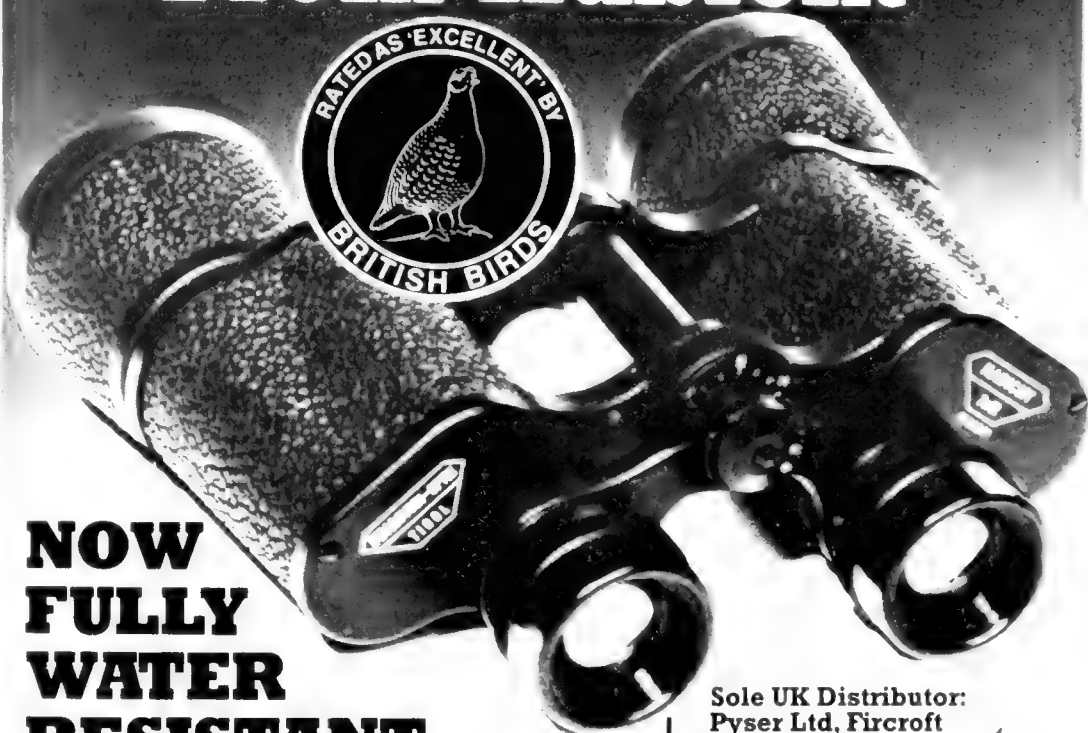
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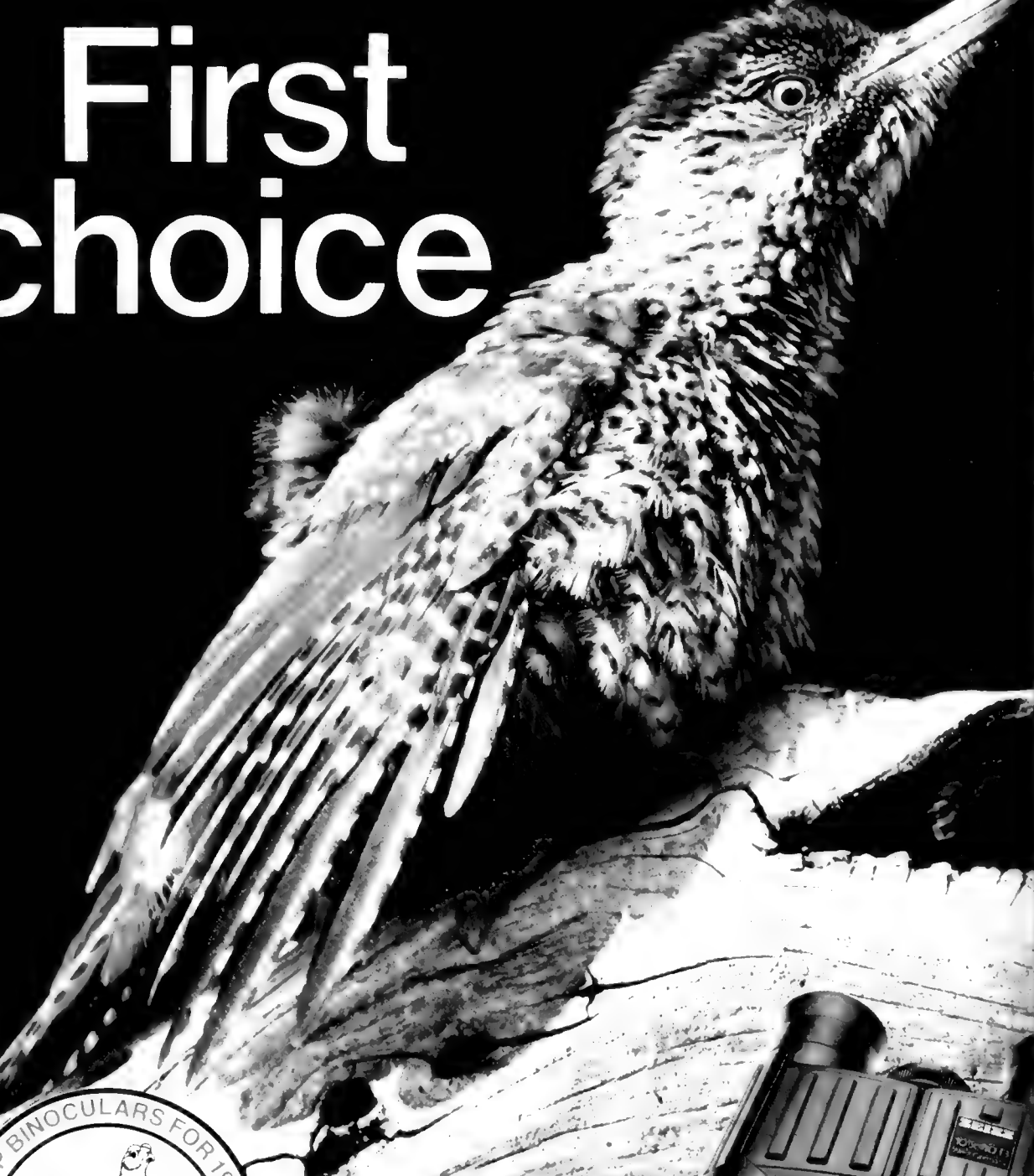
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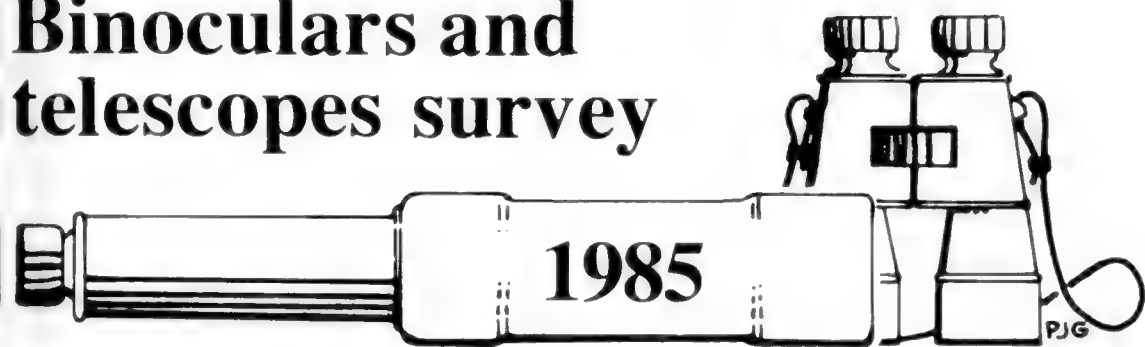
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British Birds

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Binoculars and telescopes survey



P. J. Grant and J. T. R. Sharrock

This is our third survey of *British Birds* readers' usage of binoculars and telescopes (previous surveys were in 1978 and 1982: *Brit. Birds* 71: 429-439; 76: 155-161). On this occasion, a total of 1,338 birdwatchers completed the questionnaire in our August 1984 issue, giving details of their 1,362 pairs of binoculars, and the 1,146 telescope-owners gave details of their 1,148 telescopes.

All birdwatchers own at least one pair of binoculars. Among the more experienced and dedicated birdwatchers (those likely to be *British Birds* readers), telescope ownership has been increasing very greatly. In 1978, 64% of *British Birds* readers owned a telescope; this had risen to 81% by 1982; and to 86% by 1984. The habit of owning and constantly using a telescope will also have been taken up by a smaller but probably very significant proportion of less dedicated birdwatchers. This has not been the only change. Indeed, we have been very surprised to discover how many changes there have been in only two years. It is clear that birdwatchers not only demand very high standards from their optical equipment, but are also prepared to spend a lot of money changing to what they consider will be a superior model.

Thus, there will clearly be a lot of band-wagon-jumping or following of current fashions: an already popular binocular or telescope will tend to become more popular, provided that its current owners like it and praise it when they meet fellow birdwatchers in the field. This is not to be deprecated, since it makes obvious common sense for any purchaser to buy what is already widespread and tried-and-tested. It is, however, also clear that fashions can change rather quickly, and that a new model can, by word-of-

Table 1. Most popular binoculars

The binoculars most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1984

Position	(1982 position)	Make & model	1982 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10×40B	15.4	20.7
2nd	(2)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10×50	14.2	13.1
3rd	(3)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	7.7	7.0
4th	(4)	LEITZ Trinovid 10×40B	5.7	4.8
5th	(10)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	1.8	3.5
6th	(5)	MIRADOR 10×40	3.6	3.2
7th	(6)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8×30	3.0	3.0
8th	(9)	LEITZ Trinovid 8×40B	2.1	2.7
9th=	(10)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×40	1.8	2.6
9th=	(8)	ZEISS JENA Notarem 10×40B	2.5	2.6
11th	(12)	HABICHT Diana 10×40	1.5	2.3
12th	(11)	ZEISS JENA Dekarem 10×50	1.6	1.5
13th	(—)	ROSS Stepruva 9×35	—	1.0
14th=	(—)	SWIFT Trilyte 10×40B	—	0.9
14th=	(—)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×40	—	0.9
16th	(7)	SWIFT Newport 10×50	2.8	0.8
17th=	(—)	SWIFT Osprey 7.5×42	—	0.7
17th=	(—)	PENTAX 8×40	—	0.7
		All others	36.3	28.0

Table 2. Most highly rated binoculars

Performance of binoculars as rated by their owners.

Performance rating: 6 = excellent, 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

Position	(1982 position)	Make & model	Performance rating					Average performance rating
			6	5	4	3	2	
1st	(2)	LEITZ Trinovid 8×40B	34	3	.	.	.	Excellent 5.92
2nd	(3)	LEITZ Trinovid 10×40B	57	8	.	.	1	Excellent 5.82
3rd	(1)	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10×40B	229	53	.	.	.	Excellent 5.81
4th	(5)	HABICHT Diana 10×40	22	10	.	.	.	Excellent 5.69
5th	(4)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	32	13	3	.	.	Excellent 5.60
6th	(—)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×40	7	4	1	.	.	Excellent 5.50
7th	(8)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×40	17	18	1	.	.	Very good 5.44
8th	(—)	SWIFT Osprey 7.5×42	3	6	1	.	.	Very good 5.20
9th	(7)	ZEISS JENA Dekarem 10×50	5	13	2	.	.	Very good 5.15
10th	(9)	ZEISS JENA Notarem 10×40B	10	22	3	.	1	Very good 5.11
11th	(—)	ROSS Stepruva 9×35	3	8	2	.	.	Very good 5.08
12th	(10)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10×50	36	109	29	4	.	Very good 4.99
13th	(11)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	18	53	18	5	1	Very good 4.86
14th	(14)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8×30	5	26	9	1	.	Very good 4.85
15th	(12)	MIRADOR 10×40	6	23	11	3	1	Very good 4.68
16th	(13)	SWIFT Newport 10×50	.	7	2	2	.	Good 4.45
17th	(—)	PENTAX 8×40	.	4	6	.	.	Good 4.40
18th	(—)	SWIFT Trilyte 10×40B	2	6	1	2	1	Good 4.25

mouth, gain the reputation for being an improvement and become the fashionable instrument which everyone wants to own.

The changes in these fashions, not only of current ownership, but also of birdwatchers' future buying intentions, are shown in league-table form in this report (tables 1-9).

We are most grateful to the 1,338 readers who completed our questionnaire and whose information and opinions form the basis for tables 1-9.

Table 3. The most satisfactory binoculars
Proportion of current owners who would buy the same binoculars again
(1982

Position	(1982 position)	Make & model	No.	%
1st	(2)	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10×40B	249/282	88.3
2nd	(8)	LEITZ Trinovid 10×40B	53/66	80.3
3rd	(1)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	34/48	70.8
4th	(4)	LEITZ Trinovid 8×40B	22/37	59.5
5th	(7)	HABICHT Diana 10×40	16/32	50.0
6th=	(11)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×40	16/36	44.4
6th=	(6)	ZEISS JENA Notarem 10×40B	16/36	44.4
8th	—	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×40	5/12	41.7
9th	(9)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10×50	65/178	36.5
10th	(13)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8×30	13/41	31.7
11th=	—	SWIFT Osprey 7.5×42	3/10	30.0
11th=	(3)	ZEISS JENA Dekarem 10×50	6/20	30.0
13th	(14)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	24/95	25.3
14th	(5)	MIRADOR 10×40	9/44	20.5
—	(12)	SWIFT Newport 10×50	2/11	18.2
—	—	PENTAX 8×40	1/10	10.0
—	—	SWIFT Trilyte 10×40B	1/12	8.3
—	—	ROSS Stepruva 9×35	0/13	0.0
		All others	77/379	20.3

These data are certain to influence future purchasers of binoculars and telescopes, so we feel that we are providing a helpful service to the birdwatching community. We hope that manufacturers and retailers of optical equipment will also find the information useful, since the tables summarise the views of some of the world's most critical and frequent users of binoculars and telescopes.

Readers of this report should bear one very important point in mind the whole time. The binoculars and telescopes listed in tables 1-9 are *all* good, very good or excellent. They are the best ones available, and have been chosen by very discriminating purchasers. Our survey shows expert bird-watchers' preferences within the range of *top* optical instruments. There are scores of other makes and hundreds of other models for sale, some good, some bad and some dreadful, but *even the least highly rated ones named in this survey report are still good.*

Binoculars

At the head of the list both last time and this, the popularity of *Zeiss West* Dialyt 10×40B has dramatically increased among top birders (table 1). Other models which have significantly improved their positions are *Optolyth* Alpin 10×50, *Leitz* Trinovid 8×40B, *Optolyth* Alpin 10×40, and *Habicht* Diana 10×40.

The owners of six models rate them generally as 'excellent' (table 2). There is clearly almost nothing to choose between the top three: *Leitz* Trinovid 8×40B and 10×40B, and *Zeiss West* Dialyt 10×40B. The next three most highly rated models, also generally noted as 'excellent', are the *Habicht* Diana 10×40, and *Optolyth* Alpin 10×50 and 8×40.

So far as their owners are concerned, three models are supreme (table 3).

Table 4. Top binoculars for 1985

Binoculars which would be bought again by their current owners or to which owners of other models would change^a

Position	1982 position	Make & model	1983 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10×40B	22.1	40.9
2nd	(3)	LEITZ Trinovid 10×40B	8.2	11.8
3rd	(2)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10×50	12.7	8.5
4th	(9)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	1.9	7.1
5th	(12)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×40	1.5	3.6
6th	(4)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	4.2	3.1
7th	(7)	LEITZ Trinovid 8×40B	3.0	3.0
8th	(9)	HABICHT Diana 10×40	1.9	2.5
9th	(6)	ZEISS JENA Notarem 10×40B	3.6	2.3
10th	(8)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8×30	2.1	1.3
11th	(5)	MIRADOR 10×40	4.0	1.2
12th	—	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×40	—	1.0
13th	(14)	ZEISS JENA Dekarem 10×50	1.3	0.5
14th	—	SWIFT Osprey 7.5×42	—	0.4
15th	—	SWIFT Trilyte 10×40B	—	0.3
16th	(11)	SWIFT Newport 10×50	1.6	0.3
17th	—	PENTAX 8×40	—	0.1
18th	—	ROSS Stepruva 9×35	—	0.0
		Others		12.1

Seven out of eight owners of a *Zeiss West Dialyt 10×40B* would not consider buying anything other than the same binocular again. Owners of *Leitz Trinovid 10×40B* and of *Optolyth Alpin 10×50* are also highly satisfied with their binoculars. Two out of every five owners of *Leitz Trinovid 8×40B* binoculars would change (when their preference was stated, this was always for a higher magnification, to a 10×). Other owners are, however, much less satisfied, and at least half of them will opt to change to a different model next time they need to buy new binoculars. This shows a more volatile situation than two years ago. In our last survey, 46% of owners said that they would change to another model; in our current survey, this figure has risen to 55%. Excluding the top three makes, a staggering 73.6% of owners have stated their intention of changing to another binocular when their present models need replacing. One suspects that *Zeiss West*, *Leitz* and *Optolyth* will reap the benefits of this buying bonanza.

The first choice for binoculars in 1985 is quite clear from table 4: *Zeiss West Dialyt 10×40B* is far and away the top model, having nearly doubled its share of the vote in two years. Note also, however, that *Leitz Trinovid 10×40B* has improved its percentage by almost one-third, and that the two top *Optolyth* models (*Alpin 10×50* and *10×40*) have considerably strengthened their positions. Table 4 suggests that the top six models will between them account for 75% of the binoculars purchased by *British Birds* readers in 1985. In the past two years, 5% of top birders have changed to using *Zeiss West Dialyt 10 × 40B*, so that one in five now owns that model (table 1); but two in five would like to do so (table 4), and presumably will as soon as they can afford it.

Our current survey shows that 35.9% of observers wear spectacles when birdwatching (33.1% in 1982). Of the spectacle wearers, 57% put their

Table 5. Most popular telescopes

The telescopes most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1984.
wce = with changeable eyepieces

Position	(1982 position)	Make & model	1982 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(2)	OPTOLYTH 30×75GA	16.2	19.9
2nd	(4)	KOWA TS-1/TS-2×60 wce	11.4	13.2
3rd	(3)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60×60	14.9	12.8
4th	(6)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster ×60 wce	5.2	12.6
5th	(1)	HERTEL & REUSS Televari 25-60×60	17.1	12.5
6th	(5)	NICKEL Supra 15-60×60	8.5	7.2
7th	(7)	SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60×60	4.8	3.0
8th	(10)	SWIFT Telemaster 15-60×60	1.8	2.8
9th	(8)	MIRADOR ×60 wce	3.1	2.4
10th	—	OPTOLYTH 30×80GA	—	1.2
11th	—	OPTOLYTH 22×60GA	—	1.1
12th	—	OPTICRON High resolution ×60 wce	—	0.9
13th=	—	OPTIMA ×60 wce	—	0.7
13th=	—	OPTOLYTH 22-60×70GA	—	0.7
15th	—	GREENKAT ×60 wce	—	0.6
16th	—	OPTICRON Piccolo ×60 wce	—	0.5
17th=	—	QUESTAR (mirrorlens) wce	—	0.3
17th=	—	SWAROVSKI HABICHT 30×75	—	0.3
		All others	17.0	7.3

binoculars up to their spectacles, whereas 43% lift or remove their spectacles before raising their binoculars up to their eyes (the 1982 percentages were 59% and 41%). The changes in percentages are not significant, but it is clear that, despite the big shift towards binoculars designed especially for use with *or* without spectacles (special optics, as well as fold-down eyecups), there are still many birdwatchers who do not take full advantage of the attributes of the binoculars that they own. Presumably, they prefer the loss of a fraction of a second of watching, as they lift their spectacles, to the loss of a proportion of the field of view, which would occur if they did not raise their spectacles. Binocular manufacturers should perhaps note that birdwatchers consider that a wide field of view is of vital importance to them.

Telescopes

Not only are more birdwatchers using telescopes now than a few years ago (86% now, compared with 64% in 1978), but those owning telescopes are also making more and better use of them. In 1978, 41% of owners used their telescopes regularly or always when birdwatching; this figure had increased to 76% by 1982; and to 80% in the current survey. Conversely, the proportion owning a telescope but using it only occasionally has decreased from 27% in 1978 to 8% in 1982 and 6% now. There is still a hard core of observers who resist carrying the telescope-on-tripod combination and use a tripod only occasionally or never (43% in 1978, 11% in 1982 and 12% now), but the proportion of birdwatchers converted to constant use of a tripod has continued to increase (22% in 1978, 50% in 1982 and 55% now). The demand for a first-class easy-to-handle telescope is now greater than it

Table 6. Most highly rated telescopes

Performance of telescopes as rated by their owners.

Performance: 6 = excellent, 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

Position	(1982 position)	Make & model	Performance rating					Average performance rating
			6	5	4	3	2	
1st	—	QUESTAR (mirrorlens) wce	4	Excellent 6.00
2nd	—	SWAROVSKI HABICHT 30×75	3	1	.	.	.	Excellent 5.75
3rd	(1)	OPTOLYTH 30×75GA	164	57	4	3	1	Excellent 5.66
4th	—	OPTOLYTH 30×80GA	9	3	1	.	.	Excellent 5.62
5th	(3)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster ×60 wce	77	60	5	2	.	Very good 5.47
6th	(2)	KOWA TS-1/TS-2×60 wce	83	57	8	4	.	Very good 5.44
7th	—	OPTICRON Piccolo ×60 wce	2	4	.	.	.	Very good 5.33
8th	(4)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60×60	62	66	16	3	.	Very good 5.27
9th	—	OPTICRON High resolution ×60 wce	2	8	.	.	.	Very good 5.20
10th	—	OPTOLYTH 22-60×70GA	1	6	1	.	.	Very good 5.00
11th	(6)	MIRADOR ×60 wce	5	15	8	.	.	Very good 4.89
12th	—	OPTOLYTH 22×60GA	3	4	5	.	.	Very good 4.83
13th	—	OPTIMA ×60 wce	.	6	2	.	.	Very good 4.75
14th	(7)	HERTEL & REUSS Televari 25-60×60	14	67	50	8	4	Very good 4.55
15th	(8)	SWIFT Telemaster 15-60×60	2	15	8	7	.	Good 4.38
16th	—	GREENKAT ×60 wce	.	3	2	1	1	Good 3.86
17th	(9)	SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60×60	1	5	18	8	2	Good 3.85
18th	(10)	NICKEL Supra 15-60×60	1	15	32	29	6	Good 3.71

Table 7. The most satisfactory telescopes

Proportion of current owners who would buy the same telescope again

Position	(1982 position)	Make & model	No. %	
			No.	%
1st=	(2)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster ×60 wce	108/144	75.0
1st=	—	QUESTAR (mirrorlens) wce	3/4	75.0
3rd	(4)	KOWA TS-1/TS-2×60 wce	113/152	74.3
4th	—	OPTOLYTH 30×80GA	9/13	69.2
5th	—	OPTICRON Piccolo ×60 wce	4/6	66.7
6th	(1)	OPTOLYTH 30×75GA	152/229	66.4
7th	(3)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60×60	72/147	49.0
8th	—	OPTICRON High resolution ×60 wce	4/10	40.0
9th=	—	HABICHT 30×75	1/4	25.0
9th=	(6)	MIRADOR ×60 wce	7/28	25.0
9th=	—	OPTOLYTH 22-60×70GA	2/8	25.0
12th	—	OPTOLYTH 22×60GA	2/12	16.7
—	(7)	HERTEL & REUSS Televari 25-60×60	27/143	12.5
—	—	OPTIMA ×60 wce	1/8	12.5
—	(8)	SWIFT Telemaster 15-60×60	3/32	9.4
—	(9)	SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60×60	2/34	5.9
—	(10)	NICKEL Supra 15-60×60	2/83	2.4
—	—	GREENKAT ×60 wce	0/7	0.0
—	—	All others	14/84	16.7

has ever been, and there are some very good telescopes suitable for bird-watching now available.

The top five telescopes currently account for 71% of all those owned (table 5). The most frequently owned model has changed in the past two years and is now the *Optolyth* 30×75GA. The *Kowa* ×60 has moved from fourth to second place, but the biggest increase has been in ownership of the

Table 8. Top telescopes for 1985

Telescopes which would be bought again by their current owners or to which owners of other models would change

(1982 Position position)		Make & model	1983 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	OPTOLYTH 30×75GA	24.2	26.8
2nd	(3)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster ×60 wce	12.2	16.5
3rd	(4)	KOWA TS-1/TS-2 ×60 wce	11.2	15.8
4th	(2)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60×60	20.6	13.1
5th	—	OPTOLYTH 30×80GA	—	11.7
6th	(5)	HERTEL & REUSS Televari 25-60×60	5.3	3.1
7th	—	SWAROVSKI HABICHT 30×75	—	2.1
8th	—	OPTOLYTH 22-60×70GA	—	1.3
9th	(7=)	MIRADOR ×60 wce	1.0	1.0
10th	—	OPTICRON High resolution ×60 wce	—	1.1
11th	—	QUESTAR (mirrorlens) wce	—	0.9
12th	(7=)	SWIFT Telemaster 15-60×60	1.0	0.6
13th=	—	OPTICRON Piccolo ×60 wce	—	0.4
13th=	—	OPTOLYTH 22×60GA	—	0.4
15th=	(9)	NICKEL Supra 15-60×60	0.8	0.3
15th=	(10)	SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60×60	0.6	0.3
17th	—	OPTIMA ×60 wce	—	0.1
—	—	GREENKAT ×60 wce	—	0.0
		Others	23.1	4.5

Bushnell Spacemaster ×60, which has considerably more than doubled its share, to become the fourth-most-popular model.

The ratings of three of the top four most highly rated telescopes (table 6) are based on only tiny samples, since the *Questar*, *Swarovski Habicht* 30×75 and *Optolyth* 30×80GA are possessed by only a very few birdwatchers, but they are clearly greatly admired by their owners. The *Questar*, of course, is enormously expensive, and is really in a class by itself, but the *Habicht* must certainly be worth serious consideration by anyone planning to buy a new telescope. Among the more frequently owned telescopes, the *Optolyth* 30×75GA stays clearly at the top, with an even higher performance rating than that with which it headed the table in the last survey. The owners of the two next most popular telescopes, in a slightly lower price range, are also both very highly rated by their owners, the *Bushnell* Spacemaster ×60 having now just overtaken the *Kowa* ×60 in this respect.

Owners of *Bushnell* Spacemaster ×60 telescopes are clearly very satisfied; this model has risen to top the table this year (table 7). Hardly surprisingly, the superb *Questar* is equally appreciated by its few lucky owners. The *Kowa* ×60 has also improved its position, close behind the two leaders. The well-known and popular *Optolyth* 30×75GA has been overtaken by its stable-mate, the 30×80GA, and by the *Opticron* Piccolo ×60, neither of which appeared in our last survey results.

While the *Optolyth* 30×75GA retains the lead as the telescope most birdwatchers would buy again or change to (table 8)—the position it held in the last survey—our prediction that ‘the *Bushnell* 20-45×60 Spacemaster and the *Kowa* 25-60×60 . . . are likely to be purchased in increasing numbers in the next year or so’ (*Brit. Birds* 76: 159) has proved to have been correct, these two models having both increased their percentages and

Table 9. Prices of binoculars and telescopes and summary of league positions

na = relevant model no longer available

Not all retailers stock every model, and prices vary from one retailer to another; for telescopes, the prices are particularly variable, and depend very much on whether the lens required is fixed magnification or variable; in general, the price quoted is for the cheapest alternative available

Make & model	Approx. retail price in November 1984 (incl. VAT)	Currently most popular (tables 1 & 5)	Most highly rated (tables 2 & 6)	The most satis- factory (tables 3 & 7)	Top models for 1985 (tables 4 & 8)
Binoculars					
LEITZ Trinovid 10×40B	£444	4	2	2	2
LEITZ Trinovid 8×40B	£429	8	1	4	7
ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10×40B	£359	1	3	1	1
HABICHT Diana 10×40	£240	11	4	5	8
ZEISS JENA Notarem 10×40B	£165	9=	10	6=	9
SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	£145	3	13	13	6
OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	£141	5	5	3	4
OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×40	£123	9=	7	6=	5
OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×40	£119	14=	6	8	12
SWIFT Newport 10×50	£114	16	16	—	16
SWIFT Osprey 7.5×42	£110	17=	8	11=	14
SWIFT Trilyte 10×40B	£107	14=	18	—	15
ZEISS Jena Dekarem 10×50	£81	12	9	11=	13
ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10×50	£81	2	12	9	3
PENTAX 8×40	£71	17=	17	—	17
ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8×30	£45	7	14	10	10
MIRADOR 10×40	na	6	15	14	11
ROSS Stepruva 9×35	na	13	11	—	18
Telescopes					
QUESTAR (mirrorlens) wce	£1,636	17=	1	1=	11
SWAROVSKI HABICHT 30×75	£335	17=	2	9=	7
OPTOLYTH 30×80GA	£258	10	4	4	5
OPTOLYTH 22-60×70GA	£242	13=	10	9=	8
SWIFT Telemaster 15-60×60	£235	8	15	—	12
OPTOLYTH 30×75GA	£225	1	3	6	1
BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB					
Discoverer 15-60×60	£195	3	8	7	4
HERTEL & REUSS Televari					
25-60×60	£173	5	14	—	6
BUSHNELL Spacemaster ×60 wce	£168	4	5	1=	2
NICKEL Supra 15-60×60	£160	6	18	—	15=
SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60×60	£150	7	17	—	15=
OPTOLYTH 22×60GA	£145	11	12	12	13=
KOWA TS-1/TS-2 ×60 wce	£140	2	6	3	3
MIRADOR ×60 wce	£129	9	11	9=	9
OPTIMA ×60 wce	£120	13=	13	—	17
OPTICRON High resolution ×60 wce	£102	12	9	8	10
OPTICRON Piccolo ×60 wce	£90	16	7	5	13=
GREENKAT ×60 wce	£62	15	16	—	—

rankings. Also of particular note is the *Optolyth* 30×80GA, which appears for the first time, high up in fifth position; with few present owners, it owes this to a high number of people (including many *Optolyth* 30×75GA owners) stating their intention of changing to this model 'next time around'. Our figures suggest that these four, together with the *Bushnell/Bausch & Lomb* Discoverer 15-60×60, will account for over 80% of the sales of telescopes to keen birdwatchers in the coming year or so.

Counting the cost

When it comes to choosing a pair of binoculars or a telescope, some people are lucky enough just to go straight to the best, which are almost inevitably also among the most expensive. In the top price range, personal preference will determine whether a birdwatcher wanting a 10× binocular chooses *Zeiss West* 10×40B or the substantially more expensive *Leitz* 10×40B. Over £100 cheaper than either, and almost alone at its price, there is the excellent *Habicht* Diana 10×40. The bulk of quality binoculars are in the £45-£165 price-range, and outstanding amongst these are the three *Optolyth* Alpin models (8×40, 10×40 and 10×50) at £119-£141, the 10×50 being the one most favoured by birdwatchers.

With telescopes, one also has to pay to get the best. The *Questar*, rated so highly by all its owners, is also by far the most expensive. The *Bushnell* Spacemaster ×60 is exceptional value for money: it is very highly rated, but is in the middle price-range. Other especially good buys in the middle and lower price-range seem to be the well-rated *Optolyth* 30×80GA, *Kowa* TS-1/TS-2 ×60 and *Opticron* Piccolo ×60.

There are, of course, many other binoculars and telescopes not covered by our survey. In some cases, these are very good, but are new on the market and are owned by too few birdwatchers for their quality to be widely appreciated as yet. In this category, we should mention the well-reviewed *Bushnell* Explorer II 8×40 binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 77: 203-204) and *Swarovski* *Habicht* SL 10×40 binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 77: 243-245), and the *Kowa* TSN1 and TSN2 77 mm telescopes. We always welcome submission by manufacturers or wholesalers of such newly introduced optical products for assessment and possible inclusion in our feature 'Product reports'.

Acknowledgments

We wish especially to thank the *British Birds* readers who completed our survey forms and posted them to us, thereby making this analysis possible. We are also very grateful to the Heron Optical Company, 23/25 King's Road, Brentwood, Essex, for supplying information on current prices.

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Field identification and status of black-headed Yellow Wagtails in Western Europe



Martin van den Berg and Gerald J. Oreel

The male Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* of the black-headed race *feldegg* (Sammalisto 1961) in adult breeding plumage is a distinctive bird. Descriptions and illustrations in most field guides, however, are inadequate, and of little help in distinguishing it from other dark-headed races of the Yellow Wagtail. This has resulted in misidentifications. In our opinion, most records of *feldegg* in western Europe probably result from confusion with the grey-headed race *M. f. thunbergi*.

In this paper, adult breeding plumage, bare parts and calls of these two races are described and compared. Distribution and migration of both races are reviewed, and the status of *feldegg* in western Europe is discussed.

Plumage and bare parts

According to Bruun & Singer (1978), Heinzel *et al.* (1979) and Peterson *et al.* (1983), males of the black-headed race *feldegg* in adult breeding plumage can be distinguished from those of the grey-headed race *thunbergi* by the head pattern. The race *feldegg* has a black forehead, crown, nape, lores and ear-coverts; *thunbergi* has a grey forehead, crown and nape, contrasting with black or almost black lores and ear-coverts. These features, however, are not completely diagnostic. Sammalisto (1961) demonstrated the existence of *thunbergi* with characters of both *feldegg* and other dark-headed races; moreover, of about 2,600 *thunbergi* which Sammalisto (*in litt.*) studied in Finland during 1955-80, three had a head pattern identical with that of *feldegg*.

Adult breeding plumage and bare parts of males of the two races are described and compared in table 1. This is based on an examination of skins of 13 *feldegg* and 28 *thunbergi* at the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie in Leiden and the Zoölogisch Museum in Amsterdam; on field studies during 1978-84 in Cyprus, Greece and Turkey; and on the existing literature (e.g. Bub 1981; Dittberner & Dittberner 1984; Herroelen 1982; Sammalisto 1961; Smith 1950; Svensson 1984). Male *feldegg* can normally be

Table 1. Plumage and bare parts of male Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* of black-headed race *feldegg* and grey-headed race *thunbergi* in adult breeding plumage

Feature	Differences are shown in italics	
	Black-headed <i>feldegg</i>	Grey-headed <i>thunbergi</i>
HEAD		
Forehead and crown	Black or almost black; <i>not contrasting</i> with lores and ear-coverts	<i>Grey to dark grey</i> , rarely black; <i>normally contrasting</i> with lores and ear-coverts
Nape	Wholly (including sides) black or almost black; <i>not contrasting</i> with lores and ear-coverts	Sides of nape <i>grey to dark grey</i> , rarely black; central nape <i>grey to dark grey</i> , <i>paler towards mantle</i> , very rarely black. Sides <i>normally contrasting</i> with lores and ear-coverts; centre <i>often contrasting</i> with forehead, crown and sides of nape, and nearly always with lores and ear-coverts
Lores and ear-coverts	Black or almost black	<i>Dark grey to black</i> , very rarely <i>grey</i>
Supercilium	None (in hybrids, often white to <i>yellow</i> supercilium or pre- and post-ocular stripes or flecks)	None (in hybrids, often white supercilium or pre- and post-ocular stripes or flecks)
UPPERPARTS		
Mantle, scapulars, back and rump	<i>Brighter</i> olive-green, generally with <i>blackish</i> tinge: <i>distinct</i> contrast with wings	<i>Duller</i> olive-green, generally with <i>greyish</i> tinge: <i>no distinct</i> contrast with wings
Wings	Dark brown to <i>black-brown</i> ; edges to tertials, median and greater coverts normally white, with or without yellow tinge, and <i>wide</i>	<i>Brown</i> to dark brown; edges to tertials, median and greater coverts normally white, with or without <i>olive</i> to yellow tinge, and <i>narrow</i>
Tail	Dark brown to <i>black-brown</i> , outer rectrices with white outer edges	<i>Brown</i> to dark brown, outer rectrices with white outer edges
UNDERPARTS		
Chin and throat	Yellow (in hybrids, often with white)	Yellow (in hybrids, often with white)
Rest of underparts	Yellow to deep yellow; breast band of olive or dark olive markings often <i>absent</i> or strongly reduced	Yellow, not uncommonly deep yellow; breast band of olive or dark olive markings often <i>present</i>
BARE PARTS		
	Blackish-brown to <i>black</i> . Bill averages <i>somewhat longer and more slender</i> ; hindclaw averages <i>somewhat shorter</i> (Sammalisto 1961)	Blackish-brown. Bill averages <i>somewhat shorter and more stumpy</i> ; hindclaw averages <i>somewhat longer</i> (Sammalisto 1961)

Heading drawing: Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* of grey-headed race *thunbergi* (left) and black-headed race *feldegg* (two at right) (Killian Mullarney)



70. Male Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* of black-headed race *feldegg*, Romania, June 1979
(Lubomir Hlšek)

71. Male Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* of black-headed race *feldegg*, Israel, April 1982 (Bertil Breife)



distinguished in the field from the dark-headed variant of *thunbergi* by the black or almost black central nape (often reaching to the mantle). This character, however, does not eliminate the rare black-headed variant of *thunbergi*. It is, therefore, essential to use a combination of plumage and bare-parts features when identifying extralimital *feldegg*. It should always be remembered that, even under seemingly good field conditions, the head of a normally plumaged *thunbergi* may look black or almost black. For good illustrations of both subspecies, see Jonsson (1979, 1982).

Calls

The black-headed race *feldegg* has a distinctive call note. It can be transcribed as a loud and harsh 'tsee-rr', sometimes recalling the flight call of Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*. In our opinion, this call is a useful additional feature of *feldegg*. It can, however, be confused with the call note of *thunbergi*, which can be transcribed as 'rssli' or 'rslu' (Schüz 1956). For more information, including sonagrams, on the calls of both subspecies, see Bergmann & Helb (1982) and Dittberner & Dittberner (1984).

72. Male Wagtail *Motacilla flava* of black-headed race *feldegg*, Yugoslavia, June 1978
(K. J. Carlson)





73. Male Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* of black-headed race *feldegg*, Israel, April 1982 (Bertil Breife)

Distribution and migration

The black-headed race *feldegg* breeds in southeast Europe and southwest Asia, including western Yugoslavia and Albania, and the Kalmuck Steppes and the Transcaspian region, where hybrid populations occur (Sammalisto 1961). Its European range was fairly constant during the first half of the 20th century, but it has expanded northwards in the second half (Keve 1978). It winters mainly in eastern Africa, from Sudan and Eritrea to northeastern Zaire and northern Tanzania, west to Lake Chad (Zink 1975). The spring migration is from February to April (Curry-Lindahl 1958; Zink 1975).

74. Male Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* of grey-headed race *thunbergi*, Finland, July 1958 (Eric Hosking)





75. Male Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* of black-headed race *feldegg*, France, June/July 1980
(Jean-Philippe Sibley & Olivier Tostain)

The grey-headed race *thunbergi* breeds in northern Europe and winters mainly in Africa south of the Sahara (Sammalisto 1961; Zink 1975). The Norwegian and northern Swedish population winters in western Africa, and has little or no contact with *feldegg* during winter and on migration; the northern Finnish population probably has more contact (Zink 1975). The spring migration is from March to June, most European individuals returning in May (Curry-Lindahl 1958; Zink 1975).

For more information, including references, on the distribution and migration of both subspecies, see Dittberner & Dittberner (1984).

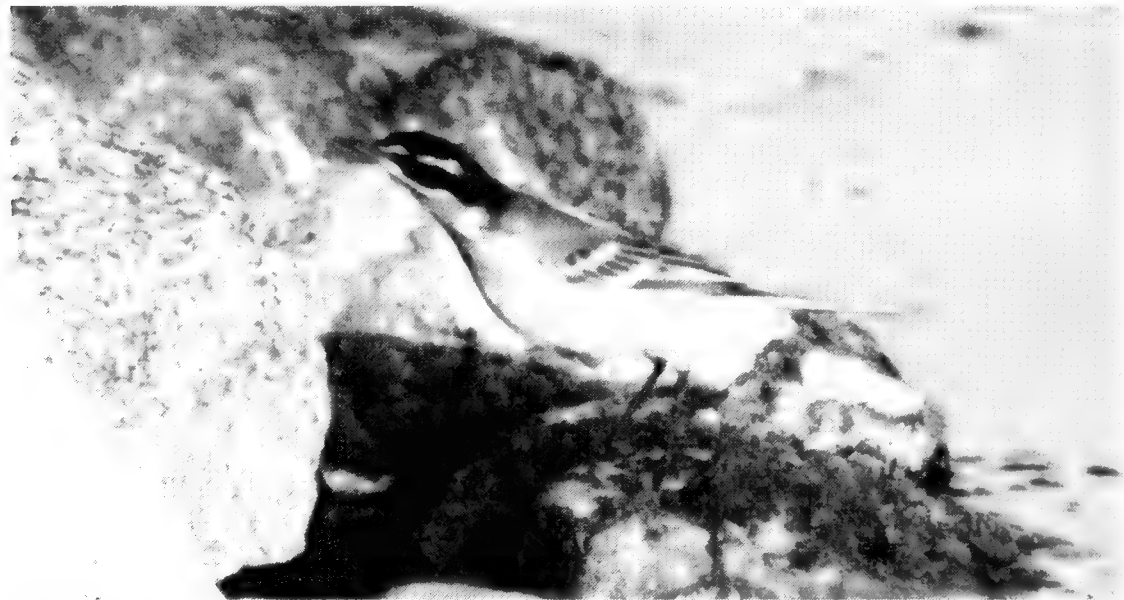
Status in western Europe

The black-headed race *feldegg* has been recorded in several west European countries, including Belgium, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden and West Germany (British Ornithologists' Union 1971; Commissie voor de Nederlandse Avifauna 1970; Herroelen 1982; Keve 1978; Rogers *et al.* 1980; Sibley & Tostain 1984; Sveriges Ornitologiska Förening 1978). For the following two reasons, we are of the opinion that most of these records are probably the result of confusion with *thunbergi*.

(i) Most descriptions of *feldegg* recorded in Britain and the Netherlands fit the dark-headed and black-headed variants of *thunbergi*, or do not exclude the possibility of the latter. This applies also to *feldegg* recorded in Belgium (Herroelen 1982).



76. Male Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* of black-headed race *feldegg*, but showing some hybrid characters (white pre- and post-ocular stripes and white on chin and throat), Yugoslavia, May 1975 (Karel A. Mauer)



77. Male Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* of black-headed race *feldegg*, but showing some hybrid characters (white pre- and post-ocular stripes), Israel, April 1982 (Bertil Breife)

(ii) Of 22 accepted records of *feldegg* in Belgium, Britain, the Netherlands and Sweden during 1958-78, 18 were in May and early June; the remaining four were in late June (two), July and October. This striking temporal coincidence with the main spring migration period of *thunbergi* in western Europe is unlikely. In theory, one would expect the majority of *feldegg* in (March and) April, when most Yellow Wagtails of the blue-headed race *M. f. flava* and of the mainly British race *M. f. flavissima* return to western Europe. This applies especially to adult males, which return well before the other age and sex categories.

In June and July 1980, a male *feldegg* successfully bred near Montereau, Seine-et-Marne, France (Siblet & Tostain 1984). Judging from the photographic evidence, it was probably a first-summer individual. The

racial identity of the female could not be established. This constituted the first breeding record for France and for western Europe.

Acknowledgments

We should like to thank Dr Gerlof F. Mees and Dr Jan Wattel for allowing us to examine skins at, respectively, the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie in Leiden and the Zoölogisch Museum in Amsterdam; and Peter J. Grant (and other members of the *British Birds* Rarities Committee), Paul Herroelen, Dr András Keve, Dr Lasse Sammalisto, Dr Jan Wattel and Dr Gerhard Zink for their most useful comments on the draft of the 1980 version of this paper.

Summary

Plumage and bare parts of adult breeding male Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* of the black-headed race *feldegg* and the grey-headed race *thunbergi* are described and compared. The race *feldegg* can be distinguished in the field from the dark-headed and black-headed variants of *thunbergi* by a combination of plumage and bare-parts features. The call note of *feldegg* is considered a useful additional feature. The authors are of the opinion that most records of *feldegg* in western Europe are probably the result of confusion with *thunbergi*.

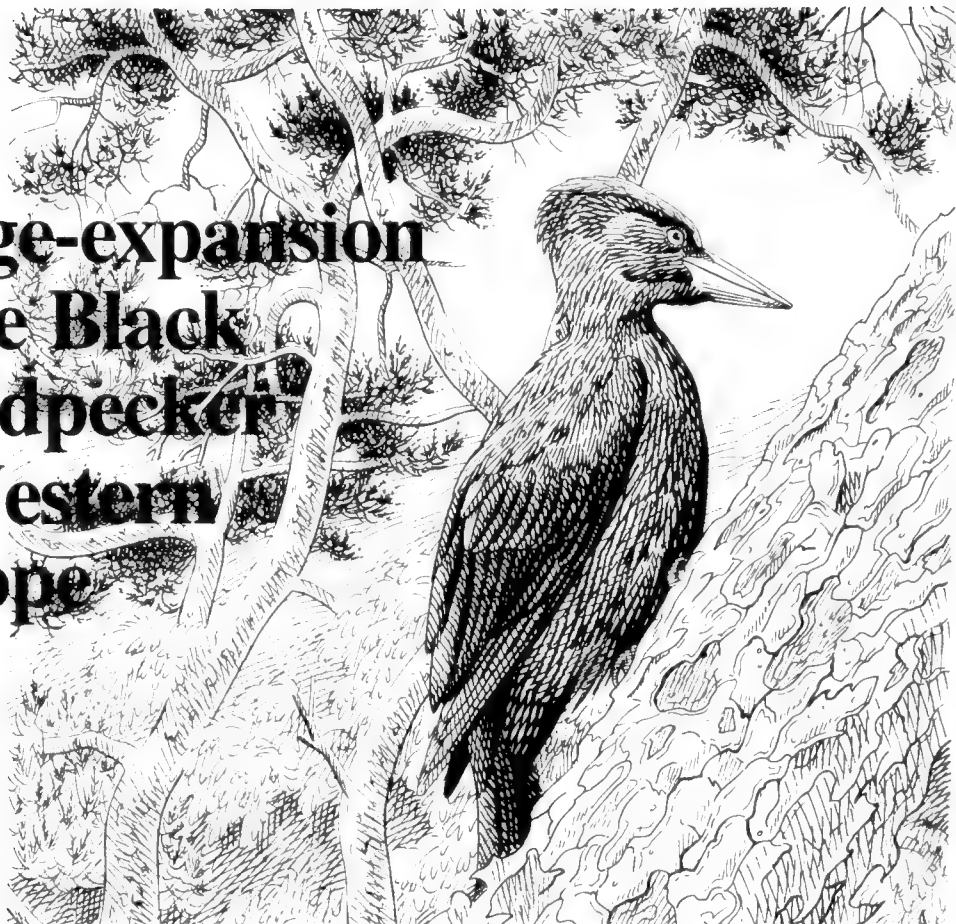
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The Rarities Committee is currently reviewing the accepted records of *M. f. feldegg*. The results of these reassessments will be published in due course. Eds

Range-expansion of the Black Woodpecker in Western Europe



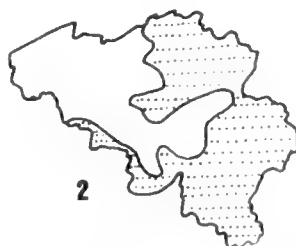
The Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* is one of the few species which have in recent years considerably extended their breeding range in some western European countries. Nesting was first reported in Belgium around 1908, and in Luxemburg and the Netherlands in 1915. Westwards expansion continued in the Netherlands, where the species has now reached the coast (fig. 1; Teixeira 1979). In Belgium and Luxemburg, progression appears to have stopped, or slowed down greatly (figs. 2 & 3; Tricot 1977; Weiss 1979). It is in France and Denmark that range-extension has been the most spectacular.

Strangely, the Black Woodpecker did not breed in Denmark before 1961, when it nested in Nord Sjaelland. It reached Bornholm (about 30km from Sweden) towards 1950, but did not nest there until 1966 (Hansen 1973); it has now completely invaded this island. In Continental Denmark, its movement was not so rapid (fig. 4; Dybbro 1976).

In France, before 1950, the Black Woodpecker bred only in mountainous areas (fig. 5), reports of sporadic nesting elsewhere not being fully confirmed. From 1957 onwards, breeding was recorded in a growing number of regions, and today it has even reached several western départements (fig. 6; Cuisin 1967, 1973, 1980; Yeatman 1976). Perhaps because of lack of observations, a few gaps remain in some inland regions, but the Black Woodpecker can be said now to inhabit the whole eastern half of France and a notable part of the western half. In 1983, it nested in at least 53 départements. Lack of suitable woodland may have locally hampered its spread towards the Channel. Its absence in some areas of France may seem surprising: for example, it has not yet been reported in the huge forest of Les

Landes (900,000ha), although it breeds in the Pyrénées mountains.

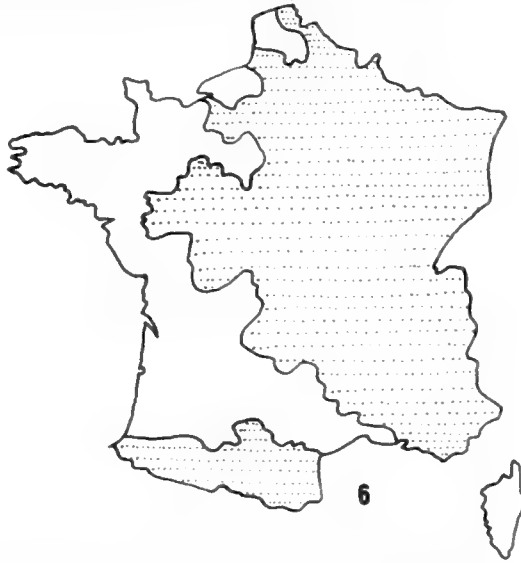
The Black Woodpecker is the sole western European woodland species that has exhibited such an increase, but why it has done so is unclear. One of the various hypotheses links this range-expansion with the plantation in many countries of coniferous trees. This tenet, however, is not acceptable everywhere, because conifers have been present for many years in some regions: examples include the Normandy hills, where they are indigenous; several forests around Paris; and since before 1850 in southern Champagne.



Figs. 1 & 2. Breeding distribution of Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* in the Netherlands (from Teixeira 1979); and in Belgium (from Tricot 1977)



Figs. 3 & 4. Breeding distribution of Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* in Luxembourg (from Weiss 1979); and in Denmark—inset, Bornholm island (from Dybbro 1976)



Figs. 5 & 6. Breeding distribution of Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* in France before 1950; and in France recently (Yeatman 1976, updated to 1983)



Moreover, the Black Woodpecker very frequently excavates its nest in deciduous trees (mainly beech *Fagus sylvatica*, but also oak *Quercus*, poplar *Populus* and aspen *P. tremula*, among others); extensive coniferous tracts are not, therefore, a *sine qua non* of its existence. If the causes remain a complete mystery in France, however, it seems that a recent influx of Black Woodpeckers in Denmark may have been brought about by forest exploitation in Sweden (Hansen 1973). Whatever the reasons, it appears that, in a small part of its immense range (western Europe to Japan), the Black Woodpecker has moved from its 'classical' habitat.

Over 80 records of the Black Woodpecker have been claimed in Britain (Fitter 1959), but so far none has proven to be acceptable. In my opinion, its genuine occurrence in Britain is possible, for a sea-crossing presents no difficulties for this woodpecker. The most westerly sighting in France, in the Nieppe forest, near Bailleul, was only about 80 km from the sea coast. Further, the distance between the Danish island of Bornholm and Sweden is the same as that between Pas-de-Calais département and Kent, and immature Black Woodpeckers are known to be prone to travel very far from their birth-place.

Figs. 1-4 and 6 show the Black Woodpecker's present breeding areas in west-central Europe (a few gaps in France are not illustrated) as given in recent atlases and, for France, based also on information provided by correspondents. They do not show localities where the species has only been sighted, such as in France, where it has been reported not very far from the Atlantic coast in Loire-Atlantique.



78 & 79. Male Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* at nest with young, Sweden, June 1959
(M. D. England)

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Points of view

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

13. Identification of bird sounds

In his admirable work on bird voices, Gerhard Thielcke (1970, *Vogelstimmen*) quite properly stated that 'the vocal sounds of birds and animals in general are peculiar to a given species. If a person devotes long enough time to a given animal group he will be able to distinguish species on the basis of their sounds just as well as on the basis of their appearance' (translation from *Bird Sounds*, 1976). In Britain at least, those bodies responsible for assessing records of unusual species seem not yet ready to embrace this principle. The fault lies with those in the field who have not made the effort to grasp the techniques of noting and reporting bird sounds.

A bird's sound is typified by just as many features as is its appearance, and it can be described in just as much detail. With due application of ear and mind, anybody can note a bird sound well enough for it to be recognised by those familiar with the species, or from sound recordings. I see no serious impediment to aurally acquired evidence reaching similarly high standards to those of visually acquired evidence.

A bird sound embodies four main characters: 'pitch', 'volume', 'tone' and 'construction'. The first two can be adequately quantified in terms of comparison with more familiar species, as is commonly done in visual description. Describing tone requires more effort, but the English language is rich in adjectives which convey even the most subtle of nuances. This is not to say that the listener should be dogmatic: what to one may be 'fluty' may to another be 'piping'; 'squeaky' may be confusable with 'wheezy', and so on. The construction can be put into words as easily as it can be 'transcribed'. The familiar 'transcription' has been relied upon far too heavily as the sole means of sound description. An important adjunct to construction involves the three other features: it is most important that emphases on, or differences between, each phrase, syllable or note in terms of pitch, tone and volume be well described.

It is equally imperative to know what the bird was doing at the time of its utterance. In general, bird sounds reflect behaviour and state of mind, and *vice versa*. If, for instance, the bird is visibly anxious, is it due to the presence of the observer, or a nearby cat, or a raptor overhead? If the call is given in flight, is it when taking off (in alarm or otherwise), or merely when passing over? All such aspects of behaviour affect the *general character* of the sound.

Hearing and listening acuity varies considerably among birders. Most of those I have met who are 'good on calls' are naturally musical people; this must be significant. Even so, a despairing 'I'm no good at calls' is heard far too often. It is up to all of us to set new standards in the reporting of bird sounds, and thereby establish new identification criteria which can no longer be ignored or overruled.

A final word to the technocrats. How about an aural equivalent of binoculars not much bulkier than a stethoscope?

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Mystery photographs



80. Lesser Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica*, North Yemen, April 1980 (S. C. Madge)

100 Last month's mystery photograph (plate 58, repeated here as plate 80), clearly shows a flock of waders. The combination of relatively short bills, dark random spots on the underparts and noticeable supercilia shows that they are plovers, but are they a flock of Lesser Golden *Pluvialis dominica*, Golden *P. apricaria*, Grey *P. squatarola* or Sociable Plovers *Chettusia gregaria*? The last would show black primaries, white secondaries, and legs protruding noticeably beyond the tail; whilst Grey Plover has obvious black axillaries. Golden Plover is more than a possibility, but note their slimness, narrow wings, prominent supercilia, and long bill relative to the head. These features point to Lesser Golden Plover. The underwings on some, however, appear white, like those of Golden Plover, rather than dusky, with smoke-grey axillaries. This is a photographic effect, however,

81. Mystery photograph 101. Identify the species. Answer next month



due, partly at least, to the bright conditions in which they were photographed, by S. C. Madge in the North Yemen in April 1980. They are, indeed, Lesser Golden Plovers, of the race *fulva*—regarded by some authorities as a distinct species (*Brit. Birds* 77: 164-165)—in transition from winter to summer plumage. I have discussed the identification features of Lesser Golden Plover in two recent illustrated contributions (*Brit. Birds* 75: 112-124; 77: 338-340).

A. Pym

PhotoSpot

10. Broad-billed Sandpiper

Any small *Calidris*-like wader with flank streaking on white underparts or a strongly striped head is worth a second look. Combined, these features are typical only of an adult Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*. Juveniles and winter adults lack the flank marks. On this small wader, the solid bill with a terminal droop is obvious at some distance. The Swedish photograph (plate 83) shows the heavy wear of a mid-breeding-season adult about to lose its scapular lines.

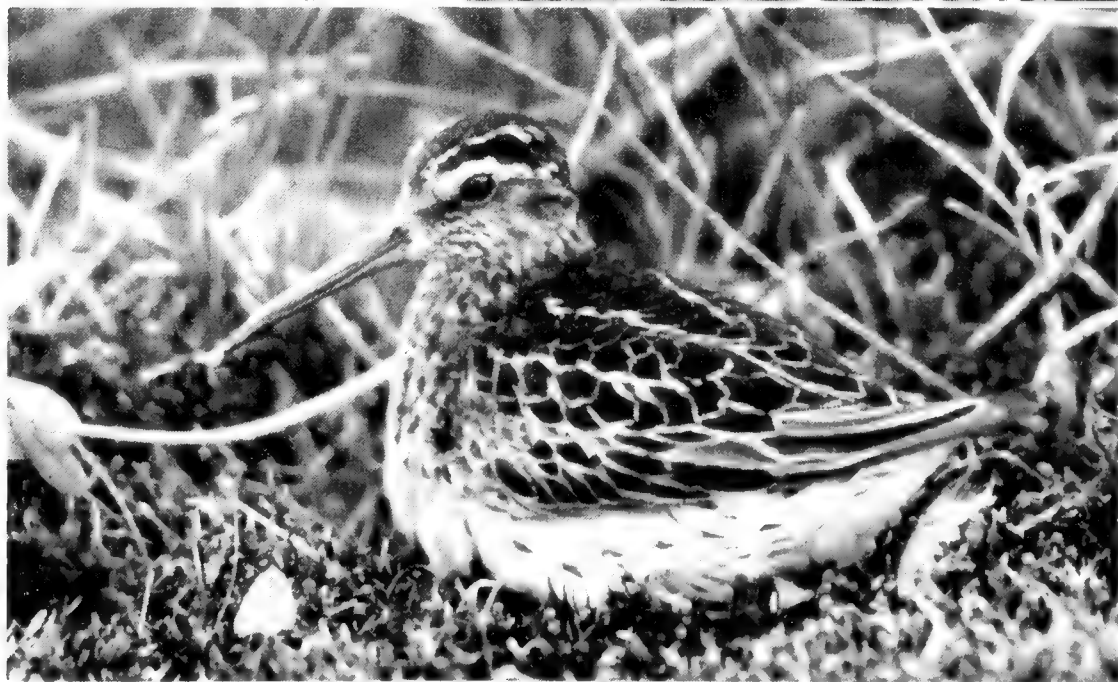
TONY PRATER

RSPB, Scan House, 4 Church Street, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex BN4 5DQ

82. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, New Zealand, March 1960
(D. A. Urquhart)



83. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* on nest, Sweden, July 1936
(P. O. Swanberg)



Notes



Broad-billed Sandpiper with long-legged appearance The appearance of a Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* at Ditchford Gravel-pits, Northamptonshire, on 25th June 1984 seems to show that there is always an exception to the rule. The photographs are typical of the bird's appearance during its two-day stay; it is notably not looking short-legged, a feature which is normally considered synonymous with this species.

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The way in which different postures can affect the shape and apparent proportions of waders was recently described and illustrated (*Brit. Birds* 77: 297, fig. 3); we thank J. Blincow for this further example. Eds



84 & 85. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, Northamptonshire, June 1984 (J. I. Blincow)



Goldeneyes displaying with Smew In bright afternoon sunshine on 14th February 1982, at Ingbirchworth Reservoir, near Penistone, South Yorkshire, we were watching a male Smew *Mergus albellus*. It had earlier been swimming on its own, but, when it came up with two pairs of Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula*, the whole of the small assemblage became a twisting, turning, excitable group, the Smew apparently joining in with the displaying behaviour of the Goldeneyes, rearing up in the water and surging up and down with them. The display lasted for a concentrated period of 13 minutes, before the two species separated to go their own ways. The Smew had been fairly close to, and in company with, at least one male Goldeneye on previous days.

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Dr Hilary Dow has commented as follows: 'It is fairly common to see such interspecific Goldeneye-Smew display groups; I have frequently observed them on the south coast of Sweden, where there are large numbers of both species overwintering. Smew \times Goldeneye hybrids are fairly frequent: I have over 20 records from the literature in my own files. Furthermore, these two species indulge in inter- and intraspecific nest parasitism to such a great extent that mixed broods and presumably some degree of 'cross-imprinting' would be expected. This may partially explain the frequency of interspecific display groups among these species.' Eds

Hen Harrier hunting at Starling roost On 15th November 1981, at Walberswick, Suffolk, C. S. Waller and I were waiting to observe the gathering of a substantial roost of Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, estimated at about 200,000 individuals, in the vast reedbed. At 15.30 GMT a considerable number were arriving and at this time a ringtail (female/immature) Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* flew in above the swirling flocks. The immediate reaction of the Starlings was to take up their well-described defence formation and harass the raptor. The harrier continued flying up and down the marsh, above the level of the adjacent trees, with a cloud of tens of thousands of Starlings in close attendance. It soon became obvious that the harrier was trying to catch a Starling by lunging upwards and over on to its back and grabbing its intended prey with outstretched talons. After several abortive attempts, it caught one and descended to reed level, followed by almost the entire roost. The prey was wriggling in the harrier's grasp, obviously still very much alive; when the raptor made an evasive movement, it dropped the Starling, which flew off apparently unharmed.

At about the same time on 21st November, with D. Fisher, J. O'Sullivan and others, I watched the Starling roost begin to assemble. On this occasion, the birds were attended by two ringtail Hen Harriers which adopted the same tactic, flying high among the enormous flocks at tree level. The Starlings' defensive pattern was again in evidence, and both harriers were attempting to catch the birds by the same clumsy upward lunge with outstretched talons. Three attempts were successful, the harrier dropping quickly to the reedbed. Both raptors returned to the air so rapidly that it seems likely that they lost the prey before they could begin to devour it. The harriers were very persistent in their attacks, but did not

seem able to reach the ground with the victim still in their grasp. Could it be that the harrier's insubstantial talons and long slender legs are sufficient in the normal hunting method of dropping on unsuspecting prey on the ground, but totally unsuitable for grabbing and maintaining a hold on prey taken in mid-air?

The only reference I have found in the literature to Hen Harriers hunting in mid-air relates to one chasing a passerine at a height of 40m and effecting a clumsy and unsuccessful stoop (Hodgson & Wyatt 1979). Dickson (1979) recorded Hen Harriers flying across a Starling roost in Galloway in which the defensive formation was taken up by the Starlings, but no attacks by the harriers were seen. Watson (1977) described a Hen Harrier shadowing a Starling roost, but this individual was not seen to take any prey; at dusk, the same harrier was noted to have a full crop and it was considered possibly to have taken a Starling after it had settled.

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Opportunistic food acquisition by Buzzard while mobbed by Peregrines On 28th May 1977, in a Lakeland valley in Cumbria, we were watching a pair of Peregrines *Falco peregrinus*. The tiercel was mobbing a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* on the side of the valley opposite the Peregrines' nesting crag, while the falcon was flying towards the eyrie with a freshly caught feral Rock Dove *Columba livia* in her talons. The falcon changed course to join her mate in stooping at the Buzzard and, while doing so, dropped the dove, which the Buzzard skilfully caught in mid air. The latter glided down and landed on the fellside with its capture, but not before being severely buffeted by both Peregrines: at least once it appeared to be struck physically. The Peregrines continued to fly overhead for several minutes, frequently giving the aggressive 'kek-kek-kek...' call, as they had throughout the incident, and occasionally stooping at the Buzzard, causing it to duck. Despite this, the Buzzard held on to the prey, and eventually the Peregrines lost interest and drifted off. On 10th June 1978, at the same site, we watched what was almost certainly the same pair of Peregrines. As before, the falcon was returning with a freshly caught dove when she changed course to mob a Buzzard on the other side of the valley; again, she dropped the dove while stooping at the Buzzard, which seized the prey, this time immediately it had hit the ground. The Buzzard then took off, fiercely mobbed by both Peregrines; it landed after a short flight, still clinging tenaciously to the dove, and was soon left in peace by the Peregrines, which had given the aggressive call frequently throughout the incident.

R. I. KINLEY and D. B. THEXTON

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Bigamy by the Kestrel During 1975-79, I made a detailed study of the population density and breeding behaviour of the Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* in 70km² of southern Hampshire. Many hours were spent making close observations of 36 occupied nests, and on four occasions I recorded evidence of bigamy. On 6th June 1975, a female was brooding six ten-day-old young while an adult male sat preening about 20m away; a second adult male flew in and presented the female with a small mammal, while the first male showed no hostility, merely shifting his perch and calling excitedly during the flurry of activity. Similar behaviour by other pairs was observed in 1977 and in 1979 (twice) at other sites, during periods of incubating and feeding of large young. In the second instance in 1979, the males were seen copulating alternately with the female at approximately half-hour intervals (this was also witnessed by numerous other observers); these males never approached each other closer than about 30m. All four cases involved two adult (at least two-year-old) males and one female (polyandry). Hostile territorial behaviour near nest sites was recorded on only two occasions.

Bigamy is clearly exceptional in Kestrels: *BWP2* gives only four previous records, three of polygyny (one male with more than one female) and one of polyandry. Polygyny may frequently go unobserved unless the nests are close together and the individual birds marked. In my study, the degree of involvement (e.g. copulation, providing of food, etc.) of each polyandrous male was also difficult to ascertain, since the Kestrels were unmarked.

The existence of an unbalanced sex ratio in a polygynous or polyandrous system is clearly not important in non-raptor species, but in the frequently polygynous Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* a 1:1.96 ratio in favour of females has been recorded in Orkney (Balfour & Cadbury 1979). An unbalanced ratio of 1:1.75 in favour of females was observed in Kestrel nestlings (Cavé 1968), but not in adults of breeding age (one year or older), where it is presumed to be 1:1. A greater degree of polygyny occurs in Hen Harriers when a plentiful food supply exists (Hagen 1969). It should follow that polyandry occurs more frequently when food is in short supply and more than one male is needed to provide for the female. In my Hampshire study, however, the Kestrels were at the third highest density on record (one pair per 394 ha; total 17 pairs), suggesting good food availability, and the unusually high incidence of bigamy was probably a result of this high density.

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Roding at night and vertical escape flight of Woodcock The notes on the Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* roding at night and on its vertical escape flight (*Brit. Birds* 75: 467-468) prompt the following. My house is situated in a large area of woodland where Woodcocks breed (the notes in *The Handbook* on length of roding period are based on observations made there). I found it by no means unusual to hear roding at various times during the night from my bed whenever I happened to be awake. As for the vertical escape flight, this depended on where the bird was when disturbed. If in deep bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, it made the usual zigzag flight. Often, however, it would be in dense patches of young birches *Betula* where it would be difficult to get out except by going straight up: on these occasions, the Woodcock would shoot up at terrific speed, as though catapulted up (it always seemed incredible how fast it could rise in so brief a time). At that time, when I was using some woodland for poultry farming, a Woodcock got into an area surrounded by high wire netting; as it was unable to walk out, and did not seem aware that it could get out only by flight, I directed it into a corner, caught it without difficulty, and launched it into the air. F. FINCHER

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According to *BWP*, Woodcocks roding for the longest time over woodland are the most successful in mating, but roding at night in Britain is not mentioned. Although the vertical escape flight is apparently not especially noted in recent ornithological literature, it is in fact normal and quite common. John Wilson's previous comments (*Brit. Birds* 75: 468) would seem still to apply. Eds

Unusual wing-tip pattern of third-year Mediterranean Gull Several times between 9th September 1982 and 15th April 1983, at Torremolinos, Malaga, Spain, I saw a Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* in normal third-winter/adult winter plumage except for two black spots across both webs 1 cm or so in from the tips of the outer two primaries. Grant (1982, *Gulls: a guide to identification*) described the usual pattern for this age as '1st (and rarely 2nd) primary with thin black line of variable extent on outer web.' The size of the spotting was not great, and would not have attracted attention at any range over 100 m or so. This was the only case of such spotting among over 1,100 adult Mediterranean Gulls seen between 1980 and 1983 in the Malaga Bay region. This individual's precise age was known because it had acquired a noose around its neck when it first appeared (in typical second-winter plumage) on several occasions between September 1981 and April 1982. P. J. Grant (*in litt.*) has commented that it may be possible for plumage development to be retarded by injury, and that the effect of the noose may have accounted for the unusual wing-tip pattern.

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Owls feeding on snails Although Malcolm J. Palmer's observation of a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* apparently feeding on a snail (*Brit. Birds* 75: 131) may be exceptional, my experiences in the Netherlands indicate that

some owl species do occasionally take snails. Among 18,789 prey items of Long-eared Owls *A. otus* collected between 1965 and 1980, I found one snail; I identified two snails among 1,933 prey items of Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* collected in the same period. The snails all belonged to the family Cepeae. There is also some evidence that Barn Owls *Tyto alba*, Eagle Owls *Bubo bubo* and Little Owls *Athene noctua* may take snails on rare occasions (Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer, 1980, *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas*, vol. 9). It is, however, certain that snails make no significant contribution to the total biomass consumed by owls.

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Head pattern of immature Citrine Wagtail The postscript to the section on Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* in Sharrock & Grant (1982, *Birds New to Britain and Ireland*) stated that 'Perhaps the most promising possibility [for separation of immatures of Citrine and Yellow Wagtails *M. flava*] so far is in different facial pattern details: Citrines have a complete pale surround to the dark "hollow-centred" ear-coverts, whereas Yellows have more solidly dark ear-coverts which merge with the dark nape.' Although this pattern may be diagnostic of immature Citrine, the complete pale ear-covert surround may not always be so obvious as shown by P. J. Grant's illustration on page 51 of that publication. We have had recent experience of two immature Citrine Wagtails in Lothian. On the first, in September 1981, this feature could be readily seen. On the second individual, however, in October 1983, at about 40m in dull light, the supercilium was prominent but its extension around the ear-coverts could not be made out; the complete pale surround showed only inconspicuously at very close range and in better light, and was always extremely difficult to see. Observers faced with a possible immature Citrine should be aware that, at least in some cases, close views in good light are needed to determine whether or not there is a complete pale surround to the 'hollow-centred' ear-coverts. We would add that, on both Lothian individuals, the brown tinge to the forehead could be seen only at close range; this was also the case with the brown tinge to the fore supercilium, shown only by the second individual.

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Similarity of Nightingale call to croaking of common frog In the paper 'Insect, amphibian or bird?' (*Brit. Birds* 77: 87-104), no reference was made to the short, croaking rasp, often repeated, of the Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*. I have heard this one- or two-syllable croak given by an adult when well-grown or recently flown young were approached by a cat and by human beings. It could be confused with the croaks of the common frog *Rana temporaria*, which, however, are more prolonged and, in Britain, have largely ceased by the time Nightingales are breeding.

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Grasshopper Warbler mistaken for Savi's Warbler On 26th April 1984, at Marham Fen, Norfolk, I heard and saw a *Locustella* warbler. Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia* was ruled out because it had no streaking, sang in short bursts (5-10 seconds in length), and sang on exposed perches. I assumed that it was a Savi's Warbler *L. luscinioides*, and another observer later confirmed this identification, based on experience of the species in the Netherlands. A mist-net was erected, and a tape-recording of the song of Savi's was played to act as a lure. Nothing happened. Next morning, a tape of the song of Grasshopper Warbler was used, and the bird was caught within seconds. In the hand, it was obviously a Grasshopper Warbler, with barring on the tail and streaking on the upperparts and upperwing-coverts. After release, it sang again, and the Grasshopper tape attracted it much closer, when it was obviously a Grasshopper Warbler.

I thank J. B. Kemp, who initially doubted that it was a Savi's. He suggested that, in some lights, the barring and streaking could not be seen. It still seems strange, however, that it should have sung on exposed perches in full sunshine and in such short bursts.

A. BANWELL

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This useful cautionary tale confirms several pitfalls in Savi's Warbler identification, as discussed recently by P. J. Grant (*Brit. Birds* 76: 78-80). Eds

Voices of Willow Tit and Marsh Tit Fully fledged young Willow Tits *Parus montanus* do indeed utter the begging calls described by K. J. Hall (*Brit. Birds* 77: 117-118), although there are often four notes on a descending scale. These hunger cries are distinctive: they have fair carrying power and sound very musical. The first syllable of the call transcribed by Mr Hall as 'dee-doo-der' is more emphatic and prolonged than the other two, whereas in the four-note phrase the notes are quickly repeated to form a phrase even in tone and rhythm. I have also noted that similar calls persist for short periods after the juveniles have left the nest-hole, but then give way to calls resembling, although more subdued than, those of the parents. (Incidentally, the basic call of the adult male is more 'nasal-sounding' and deeper in tone than that of the adult female.) The Willow Tit has only one, well-known, basic song: a very delicate refrain consisting of a simple repetition of a series of four to five notes which are balanced in pitch, the complete song-phrase lasting not much more than one second. It also possesses a very subdued warbling type of song (almost a sub-song), but during 27 years' observation I have heard this on only two occasions, both in autumn. It was also noted by Ludwig Koch (1941, *Songs of Wild Birds*). I recall that this song, although subdued, had appreciable carrying power. It gave me the impression of being intermediate between sub-song and full song; it was uttered in brief snatches, and could hardly be regarded as territorial in character. (The true sub-song of most species is intrinsically different from the primary song, and can be described as an 'inward warbling' embracing a wide frequency range of rambling and often discordant sound without set pattern.) The song was like that of a Canary *Serinus canaria* in pattern and included odd call notes similar to those uttered

by Siskins *Carduelis spinus*. To my ears it was reminiscent of portions of the song of Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, sometimes also of the liquid rendering of the Goldfinch *C. carduelis*.

The Marsh Tit *P. palustris*, unlike the Willow Tit, utters quite a variety of different songs, including song variants (six different song types, together with other vocalisations, are illustrated in my *British Bird Vocabulary* cassette series, vol. 4, side C). These various songs may not all be well known and may possibly be confused with those of other species. They may not all be common to the species generally, but they are not necessarily restricted to individual males (four of the song types in *British Bird Vocabulary* were included in the repertoire of three different males). In contrast to the Willow Tit, fully fledged young Marsh Tits do not appear to be very vocal; their food-soliciting calls are also of a different pattern and much more subdued than those of young Willow Tits.

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Letters

Insect, amphibian or bird? During the mid 1960s, on a visit to Walberswick, Suffolk, I watched a Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* flying over the reedbeds for several minutes and giving a very convincing rendition of the 'kok-kok-kok' call of the male common toad *Bufo bufo*. Had the bird not been in view, I would have had no hesitation in recording the amphibian. This call seems approximate to the Bittern's warning call, as indicated in *BWP*, but the written account does not emphasise the croaking nature of the sound.

Another interesting Suffolk confusion was between the churring of Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus* and the distant noise of the water-cooled *Velocette* motorcycle which seemed to be in vogue with the rural constabulary of the area 20 years ago.

MICHAEL CLEGG

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Michael Clegg's final paragraph recalled a similar incident, described for us by Dr J. J. M. Flegg: 'During fieldwork for *The Hertfordshire Breeding Bird Atlas* (1982), Chris Mead, Chris Cox and I suffered a similar problem at the hands of the police. During a nocturnal 'owl-listen' across the county, we investigated a continuing call, precise enough to convince the three of us (with ample Mediterranean experience) that we had found a Scops Owl *Otus scops*. With quickening heartbeats, we pursued it. To our chagrin, however, we discovered that it, too, emanated from a police *Velocette* motorcycle: the police radios at that time emitted (when at rest) a monotonous, metronomic, whistling "kiu . . . kiu . . . kiu . . ."! Eds

Song of Grasshopper Warbler As a matter of historical fact as well as scientific interest, let it be recorded that as long ago as 1950 Carl Weismann (*Dansk Ornithologisk Forenings Tidsskrift* 44: 19-22) analysed the song of the Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* on an oscillograph and showed that the singer produced 26 double notes a second (cf. *Brit. Birds* 77: 115).

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Calls of Bonelli's Warbler With reference to notes published on differences between the calls of eastern and western races of Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (*Brit. Birds* 76: 537), may I refer you to my paper on the subject which appeared 13 years ago, 'Notes sur le Pouillot de Bonelli oriental, sa distribution et sa voix' (*L'Oiseau* 43: 75-79). The obstacle of language seems to be growing now in Europe between ornithologists. Most Continentals make serious efforts to read English publications, but the reverse seems not to be true. Fortunately, the outlook is broadening with your journal and this could perhaps lead to better understanding and help alleviate irritation if the trend is followed.

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On 22nd April 1976, whilst in the Dibbin Forest in Jordan, I noted Bonelli's Warblers with a what to me was a very odd 'chip' call note, quite different from the usual call. With such different calls, however, are we dealing with different subspecies, or different species?

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During 21st July to 16th August 1983, I came into contact with many Bonelli's Warblers in the French and Spanish Pyrénées. The only call heard during this time was a single note, loud and sharp, with a very slight upward inflection at the end, which I rendered 'pziuf'. The call was short, with a slightly metallic, buzzing quality, similar in pitch to the call of Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*. The majority of the birds observed showed bright fresh remiges and rectrices of juvenile plumage. Circumstances do suggest that this call is uttered by juveniles, and I found it significantly different from that of adults of the eastern race *orientalis*, despite the similarity of phonetic renderings given in *British Birds* (76: 537). To my ears, the call of *orientalis* has a similar quality to that of Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, being louder and shorter as well as slightly lower than that of juveniles heard in the Pyrénées.

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We are grateful to Michael Wilson for drawing our attention to a further paper on differences in both song and call of the two races of Bonelli's Warbler: Helb, Bergmann & Martens (1982, *Experientia* 38: 326-327) pointed out that the vocal differences were first noted as far back as 1905! They also summarised experiments where calls and songs of the race *orientalis* elicited no response from birds of the nominate race when played in their territories, and suggested that the two forms may well be separating into two species. Basically, the nominate race calls 'doo-eeo', whilst *orientalis* calls 'tyip'. The song of *orientalis* was described by Géroudet (1973) as being briefer, more liquid and weak in resonance in comparison with that of the nominate race. EDS

Vocalisations and *Phylloscopus* taxonomy It is well known that certain populations of some *Phylloscopus* warblers have rather different calls and, to a certain extent, also songs (e.g. recent correspondence concerning the two races of Bonelli's Warbler *P. bonelli* and the more familiar differences in the calls of *tristis* and nominate Chiffchaffs *P. collybita* (*Brit. Birds* 74: 444; 76: 537; 77: 24-25, 429; 78: above). Recently, Helb *et al.* (1982) advocated that the two forms of Bonelli's Warbler are sufficiently different

vocally to warrant splitting specifically. Svensson (1984) considered that Yellow-browed Warblers *P. inornatus* of the nominate race and *humei* should be split on the same basis. Although I agree that the vocal differences involved in these cases are considerable, these differences between different populations occur in many other species in the genus. In recent years, I have been fortunate enough to have travelled in the hot-bed of *Phylloscopus* evolution in the USSR, the Himalayas and China; sorting out some of the identities of these warblers has sometimes become a problem as a number of species sing and call quite differently in well-separated parts of their range. Incidentally, it was noted that the race *mandellii* of the Yellow-browed Warbler seemed to be somewhat intermediate between *humei* and the nominate race vocally, taking some of the strength out of Svensson's proposals. Both Pallas's Warblers *P. proregulus* and Arctic Warblers *P. borealis* are involved in this situation and, more importantly, Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides*. Although the songs of western Greenish Warblers of the race *viridanus* and the closely related Green Warbler *P. nitidus* are distinctly different, on hearing Greenish of the same subspecies around Tashkent it was noted that the song seemed closer to Green than to Greenish heard near Moscow. Clearly, we are on the verge of either splitting many more forms of *Phylloscopus* on song differences or lumping some on discovering that vocalisations vary so much as to render conventional tools of systematics of little use within this complex genus. We are living in an age of ease of travel and the portable tape recorder, and I urge anyone travelling east to record as many sounds of *Phylloscopus* warblers as possible. Analysis of the results will be the only way that we can start to understand just what is happening with this fascinating group of birds.

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Seventy-five years ago...

'THE LANCEOLATED WARBLER (*Locustella lanceolata*) IN LINCOLNSHIRE. A NEW BRITISH BIRD. BY G. H. CATON HAIGH. When walking along the sea-bank at North Cotes, Lincolnshire, on November 18th, 1909, I shot an example of the Lanceolated Warbler (*Locustella lanceolata*). I first observed the bird in the long grass on the side of one of the marsh-drains, out of which it ran on to the short grass of the adjoining field. I watched it for a short time as it ran about the ground like a mouse, and I noticed that it kept its tail depressed, and not erected over the back, as is usually the case with the Grasshopper-Warbler (*Locustella naevia*) when running over open ground. At one time it flew up to a barbed-wire post close by, up which it climbed with the facility of a Tree-Creeper. It soon flew back to the ground, and I shot it just as it reached the long grass again. Unfortunately the bird was much shattered by the shot, and I had great difficulty in making a skin of it. It proved to be a male, and I think adult, and was excessively fat.'

'MARKING BIRDS. We hope that our readers will mark a large number of birds this season. Some of the best results are obtained by ringing a great many birds of the same species, such as colonies of Gulls, Terns, etc . . . The rings are kept in packets of twenty each, in three sizes, large size for Gulls, Ducks, etc., medium size for Thrushes, Terns, etc., small size for Robins, Warblers, etc. Requests for rings should state the quantity required of each size. Eds.' (*Brit. Birds* 3: 353-354, 367, April 1910)

Announcements

Quicker books from British BirdShop Over the past couple of years, many *BB* subscribers have obtained their bird books through British BirdShop, thereby greatly helping *BB*'s finances (and ensuring larger issues for everyone). These book orders have been despatched by the individual publishers. The service has generally been very efficient, but occasionally one or another publisher has caused a hiccup—the usual explanations being 'the computer was on the blink' or 'the warehouse staff have been under great pressure.'

We are now delighted to announce a link-up which should ensure prompt and efficient despatch of all book orders for *BB* subscribers. The newly formed Natural History Book Service will be despatching for us all book orders sent to British BirdShop. They have guaranteed a 48-hour turn around after receipt of the order on every title listed in British BirdShop. As before, *BB* subscribers in the UK & Eire can obtain their **books post free if ordered through British BirdShop**.

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'BWP' reminder Volume IV of *Birds of the Western Palearctic* is still available, price £60, post free to subscribers in the UK & Eire, through British BirdShop (see page xv).

£30 off 'BWP I-IV'. AN EXCLUSIVE OFFER TO 'BB' SUBSCRIBERS. The usual cost of the first four volumes of *BWP* is £55 + £55 + £55 + £60 = £225. As well as receiving them post free (in UK & Eire), *BB* subscribers can obtain these four volumes for £195, saving a total of £30, if ordered through British BirdShop (see page xv).

'The Popular Handbook' That classic book, *The Popular Handbook of British Birds* by P. A. D. Hollom, which has been unavailable for some months, will, we understand from H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd, be back in print towards the end of April. Copies can now again be ordered through British BirdShop (see page xv).

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Old binoculars and field guides needed urgently! ... for teachers in countries where these items are difficult to obtain. Your old binoculars or field guides, collecting dust in a cupboard, can be put to good use through the ICBP's British 'Stop the Massacre' Committee which has launched this appeal. Please send them (your postage will be refunded if you ask) to: Stop the Massacre Committee, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.



Derwent decision In November 1984, the Minister of Agriculture decided to reject the Ouse and Derwent Internal Drainage Board's application for grant-aid to pump-drain the 75 ha North Duffield Carrs—61 ha of which are part of the 783-ha internationally important wetland Site of Special Scientific Interest of Derwent Ings, North Yorkshire. Discussions between the IDB, the Nature Conservancy Council, the RSPB and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust started in autumn 1980. The IDB wished to install pumps to aid drainage of the Carrs between March and November, claiming that progressively higher levels in the River Derwent since 1976 were impeding drainage of water from the Ings alongside: the quality of the pasture for summer grazing and hay cutting had deteriorated and the scheme would correct this. But the IDB was unable to detail the cause of the alleged deterioration of drainage and unable to produce figures to

support its case. The conservation bodies thought that pumping would make the site drier, to the detriment of the wetland flora and breeding waders and wildfowl (especially Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*) for which the area is renowned. It was also feared that 'take-up' of the agricultural benefits of the scheme would lead to greater herbicide- and fertiliser-use, also damaging wildlife. The project was also seen by the IDB as a pilot, likely to lead to pump-drainage for the remainder of the Ings. It was suggested that a temporary pump could be installed and its impact on flora, fauna, the agricultural use and hydrology of the Carrs monitored for five years. If it damaged the wildlife interest of the site, it would be withdrawn immediately. Before its installation, three years of monitoring existing conditions would be required to provide control data for comparison. The IDB, however, found the delay and the cost of all this unacceptable, and discussions broke down. In August 1983, the IDB submitted its original proposals to the MAFF, requesting grant-aid for the scheme, unmodified to meet conservation objections in any way. The NCC, the RSPB, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, the Wildfowl Trust and the International Waterfowl Research Bureau all formally objected to the scheme. The RSPB and the YWT also submitted detailed economic evidence, showing that the IDB had overstated the agricultural benefits of the scheme and that it was not economically viable. Objections to the scheme were supported by many members of the public and Members of Parliament (notably Kenneth Carlisle MP (Conservative), Lincoln, and Mr Peter Hardy MP (Labour), Wentworth. The North Duffield Carrs case became an important test of the Government's commitment to wildlife conservation. In ornithological terms, the decision not to grant-aid the pump-drainage scheme is at least as important as the historic 1978 decision, after public inquiry, to reject Southern Water Authority's proposals for the pump-drainage of Amberley Wildbrooks in Sussex. (Contributed by Gwyn Williams)

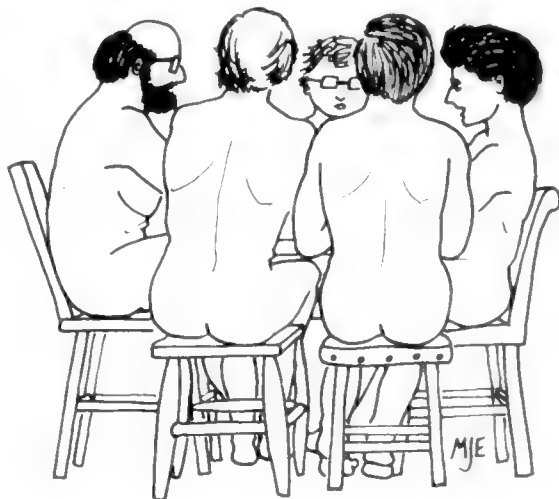
Congratulations . . . belatedly, to Derek Barber, on his knighthood, awarded in last year's Birthday Honours List. Sir Derek is Chairman of the Countryside Commission, and before that was Chairman of the RSPB Council.

Cormorant mystery solved? M. J. Pointon has written to us on—literally—a long-standing problem: 'I have read, and heard in lectures, of the Cormorant's habit of perching with its wings held out. The two main reasons given to me have been: (i) to dry the wings after long arduous fishing bouts, or (ii) the posture somehow aids digestion. At Radipole RSPB Reserve, together with other local birders, I watched a Cormorant fishing furiously for a long time; it caught nothing, got out of the water and joined its colleagues on a wooden platform. It immediately opened its wings, this bird, then, being the only one with its wings open. Torrential rain then began to pour down for some fifteen minutes. The Cormorant remained with its wings held out throughout this downpour, obviously not drying anything whatsoever. Not having caught any fish either, it could not be aiding its digestion too much. Then, all became obvious to me. It, like all other fishermen, was telling the fisherman's tale "You should have seen the one that got away!" All present agreed with me that this must be the answer.'

Condor news For too long, effective research into the problems facing the California Condor *Gymnogyps californianus*—necessary if a last-ditch conservation effort was to be mounted—and proposals to establish a captive-breeding programme were bedevilled by endless arguments as to who, or what, was right. Fortunately, that phase is now over, and ecological research is well under way. This is aided by radio-tagging of wild condors: eight of the remaining 17 carried radios by mid December 1984. Some idea of the immense problems facing condor researchers can be had from the incredible fact that one of the oldest tagged individuals is known to have wandered over an area of about 8,000 km² (3,000 square miles)! There are now 16 in captivity, the famous 16-year-old, one wild-trapped four-year-old, three taken as chicks, and 11 hatched from eggs taken in the wild.

BB Photographic Consultant discovers species new to science The latest issue of *Ibis* (127: 1-6) includes a paper by Dr Hilary Fry and Don Smith concerning a cliff-swallow which Don found dead on Sanganeb Reef, a coral atoll in the Red Sea 20 km northeast of Port Sudan. Now named the Red Sea Cliff Swallow *Hirundo perdita*, this species' nearest relatives are *H. preussi*, *H. rufigula* and *H. spilodera* of western and southern Africa. The breeding range of the Red Sea Cliff Swallow is, of course, still unknown, but the authors speculate that it 'is unlikely to breed in Arabia and will be found to range in the Red Sea hills of Sudan or Ethiopia.'

It made us smile . . . The vision that was brought to mind when we read the page-proofs of February *British Birds* and found this delightful printer's error: 'Compiled by Robert Spencer and the Bare Breeding Birds Panel'.



The Bare Breeding Birds Panel (M. J. Everett)

R & M Conference The 17th annual BTO Ringing and Migration Conference at Swanwick, Derbyshire, during 4th-6th January 1985, proved as popular as ever, with a near-400 capacity attendance. Joe and Ann Hardman and their Arden Ringing Group helpers hosted the event with their usual efficiency. Brian Little filled the traditional Friday evening travelogue spot

with an often very humorous account of a June visit to Japan. A major scoop by the conference organisers was the booking of that guru of in-the-hand identification and ageing techniques, Lars Svensson, whose talk on birdwatching in Siberia was delivered with the same precision and clarity which marks his writings: it provided an excellent start to the Saturday sessions, and was further enlivened by cleverly synchronised tape recordings of the birds on the screen. At the end of his talk, he was appointed as an honorary BTO ringer in recognition of his services to ringers in Britain. Crammed between this and the final session on Sunday—a superbly delivered and illustrated lecture by Fred Cooke on a Canadian population of Snow Geese—was a varied programme of items, of interest mainly to the ringer, but also some equally entertaining for the more general birdwatcher. Among these were Rhys Green's age-related wader bill measurements; the Interwader ringing studies of wader movements in the East Asia/Pacific flyway by Duncan Parish; and an all-you-could-ever-want-to-know-about-the-Pied-Flycatcher session by Chris Mead and Tim Stowe. The ever-popular *BB* mystery photograph competition attracted 82 entrants, and an exceptional 14 all-correct entries included Lars Svensson's (clearly, he can practise what he preaches!) and that of Paul Harvey who, after a hat-draw, won the prize of a bottle of champagne. (*Contributed by PJG*)

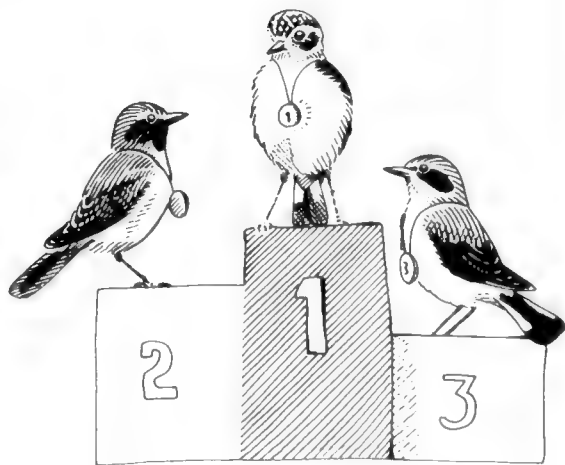
David Hunt As we were going to press, we learned of the tragic death of David Hunt, killed by a tiger in the Corbett Reserve in India in late February. We extend our deepest sympathy to his widow and family. An obituary will be appearing in due course.

North Northumberland Bird Club We owe an apology to this new, very active and apparently highly successful club for having neglected to mention its formation well over a year ago. Anyway—we were delighted to hear from its Chairman, Graham Bell, of the success in its first year, and hope that its members will forgive us and accept our best wishes for 1985. If you live in their area, why not join us? For more information, write to J. Turnbull, 3 Newham Village, Chathill, Northumberland.

New recorder for Fife and Kinross The new recorder is Douglas Dickson, 133 Duddingston Drive, Kirkcaldy, Fife KY2 6XG, who takes over from Ian Cumming.

What they say We are grateful to Bernard Zonfrillo for drawing our attention to the Sunmed Holidays' brochure which tells of the Raven Blackbird, the Bonell's Warbler, the Woodchat Shrike and, best of all, the Toopot Screamer, all of which you can see in southern Crete. Having twitched them, dash up to Harderbroek Reserve in the Netherlands, where, as Dr J. H. Lawton has pointed out to us, the brochure on the new town of Almere almost guarantees a real five-star lifer because 'here breed harriers, dodos, bitterns and grebes'. Or, if you prefer something closer to home, try Richmond Park: Bruce Kerr has shown us a *Guardian* cutting where it says 'on milder days you could hear thrushes clearing their throats in preparation for the clarity of the new year songs' and 'coots and a few random black-headed river gulls cry . . .' But watch out what you take with you if you go to the Republic of Ireland: Martin Garner has sent us the *Customs Guide for Travellers* where it says 'The principal articles, the importation of which is prohibited or restricted are: arms, ammunition and explosives, budgerigars and other birds of the parrot species . . .' Presumably this includes the Military Macaw *Ara militaris*?

Bird names explained . . .



Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* (Brett Westwood)

Recent reports

Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson



These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

The dates in the report refer to January unless otherwise stated.

Hard-weather movements

The year began with cold northerlies as high pressure to the west blocked the mild westerlies. Even colder Siberian air which was affecting the Baltic pushed south-westward, arriving over southeast districts of England on 6th, with heavy snowfalls followed by sub-zero temperatures over the following days. With the centre of pressure moving northwest over Britain and Ireland, the weather became settled, but, as the winds turned easterly, a further blast of freezing air arrived over British eastern counties on 12th. Temperatures remained near or below zero over the country for the next week, with most inland waters frozen over.

The wintering wildfowl were obviously affected. Flocks of **Wigeons** *Anas penelope* were observed moving off-shore at Sandwich Bay (Kent), with totals of 1,120 on 11th, 2,346 on 18th and 3,500 on 19th. On the Isle of Sheppey (Kent), 22,000, twice the normal number, were reported and on Jersey (Channel Islands) about 1,000 birds were found on 19th, where usually none is present in most winters. Farther north, at Minsmere (Suffolk), off-shore movements were noted, with a maximum of 362 south on 12th. Probably these counts involve some movement from the Continent where conditions were worse. Flocks of **White-fronted Geese**

Anser albifrons, which were also seen at Sandwich Bay, with 150 on 5th and 19th, 190 on 20th and 121 on 22nd, were probably cross-Channel birds. A flock of 11 was also seen on 12th at Pagham Harbour (West Sussex); inland, 110 flew over Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire), again on 12th, 37 were present at Grafham Water (Cambridgeshire) on 19th and 20th, and an influx was noted in southeast Scotland where a flock of 24 on 22nd at Tynninghame (Lothian) was the largest. **Bean Geese** *A. fabalis* also arrived at Sandwich Bay, with 12 on 17th and nine on 22nd, and seven were seen at Stewartby (Bedfordshire) on 13th. At the beginning of the month, there was a good scattering of reports of **Smews** *Mergus albellus*, presumably escaping the bad Continental weather, but, as this moved across the North Sea, their numbers increased. Small flocks were found on ice-free waters over much of Britain, notable concentrations being 23, including 13 males, on the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) on 23rd, 15 in the Lea Valley (Essex) on 19th, 11 in Christchurch Harbour (Dorset), six in Jersey from 19th to 30th, and, inshore, 23 at Sandwich Bay on 17th, 10 at Ipswich Docks (Suffolk) and 15 at Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire).

Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena* also became commoner, with groups of five and seven along the Lothian coast and small numbers scattered inland. All five common species of grebe could be seen together near

Sandwich Bay and at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) on 20th, the last locality also holding all three common species of diver *Gavia* on the same day. The **Black-throated Diver** *G. arctica*, in particular, was driven inland, with singles reported from nine reservoirs in England. **Velvet Scoters** *Melanitta fusca*, **Scaups** *Aythya marila* and **Red-breasted Mergansers** *Mergus serrator* were reported also on inland waters in small numbers, and there was a small influx of **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina*, with two on Rutland Water and singles elsewhere. Another species affected by the freeze was the **Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*. Nine reports were received of the species in unusual places, including Scunthorpe Steelworks (Lincolnshire) (a boom in the economy?), five on Jersey on 19th and four at Christchurch. Hopefully these birds managed to survive the freeze which lasted until 21st, when mild Atlantic westerlies arrived, with temperatures climbing above the average until the end of the month.

Seabirds

Iceland *Larus glaucoideus* and **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus* did not show an increase of numbers during the cold spell as conditions were generally milder to the northwest of Britain. An **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea*, however, did appear at Covehithe/Benacre (Suffolk) on 13th, 16th and 19th, and the **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* stayed at Thurso (Highland) until mid month. **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* were reported at seven coastal areas, including six at Plymouth (Devon), and inland at Fairburn Ings (North Yorkshire) on 26th and Willen Lake on 28th. Six **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* were present in Northern Ireland and singles were found at Hoy (Orkney) on 17th, at Plymouth, near Lincoln (Lincolnshire), at Par (Cornwall) and at Preston (Devon) (plates 86 & 87). The

Laughing Gulls *L. atricilla* remained into January at Hull (Humberside) and New-castle (Tyne & Wear), and a **Bonaparte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* was seen at Newquay (Cornwall) on 24th. Wintering skuas included an **Arctic** *Stercorarius parasiticus* and a **Pomarine** *S. pomarinus* at Heacham (Norfolk) on 1st and **Great Skuas** *S. skua* at Swarkestone Reservoir (Derbyshire) on 6th and Minsmere on 18th. Unseasonal **Sandwich Terns** *Sterna sandvicensis* were reported from Jersey on 2nd, Sandwich Bay on 22nd and three on the Lothian coast. Twenty **Little Auks** *Alle alle* passed Flamborough Head (Humberside) on 1st and others were seen at Belfast Lough (Co. Down) on 3rd and at Walney (Cumbria) on 9th.

Birds of prey

A few more records of **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* were received, of singles at Scunthorpe, at Minsmere on 5th, at Birsay (Orkney) on 13th, two on Chislet Marshes (Kent) and continued sightings of one at Copeland Island (Co. Down). An adult **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* was a rare find at Abberton (Essex) on 25th and one, possibly two, others were seen in the Flamborough area. A **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* haunted the Isles of Scilly from 5th to 19th.

Passerines

Although the number of winter thrushes seems down in many areas, the cold snap brought them into suburban areas to feed, one flock, surprisingly, including a **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus* at Sabden (Lancashire) from 14th to 19th. Another surprising garden feeder was a **Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* at Taunton (Somerset) on 20th. **Waxwings** *Bombicilla garrulus* became more numerous in the south as the weather deteriorated; 50 were estimated in east Norfolk on 5th, 25 at Sittingbourne (Kent)

86 & 87. First-winter Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis*, January 1985: left, Cornwall; right, Devon (J. C. Nicholls)





on 15th. 20 at Benacre (Suffolk) on 20th and singles at Cambridge, Barrow (Cumbria) and Grafham. A late report was of 20 at Iwerurie (Grampian) on 23rd December. **Arctic Redpolls** *Carduelis hornemanni* which had arrived earlier last autumn were still being found; one was trapped at Spurn (Humberside) on 17th and another was reported at Whiteadder (Borders) from 2nd to 19th. A **Siberian Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* was still present at Spurn until 12th, as were the **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* at Feswick Bay (Highland) until at least 13th and the Belfast **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* throughout the month.

Waders and wildfowl rarities

An Asiatic **Lesser Golden Plover** *Pluvialis*

dominica fulva was an excellent find in the Bridlington (Humberside) area, but stayed only a few days to about 28th, and a **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* was a surprise visitor to Walney from 8th to 24th. Four **Cranes** *Grus grus* which were seen in Kent around the middle of the month may well turn out to be the long-staying group previously in Norfolk. Also in Kent was a **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* at Laysdown, and the only report this winter of a **Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus* was of one at Abberton on 30th. Embo (Highland) continued to attract visitors to see the **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* and the four **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata*, and two of the latter species were also present in Donegal Bay (Co. Donegal).

Latest news

The appearance of a female **Little Crane** *Porzana parva* in early March in the Cuckmere Valley (East Sussex) caused much excitement. There were a few **Garganeys** *Anas querquedula* in Sussex and Norfolk; **Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia* were at Radipole (Dorset) and a single **House Martin** *Delichon urbica* appeared at Wells (Norfolk) on 9th. Several **Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* were scattered around Devon, Dorset, Norfolk and Sussex. An **Arctic Redpoll** was still at Wells on 10th March.

Reviews

The Bee-eaters. By C. H. Fry. Illustrated by the author and John Busby. T. & A. D. Poyser, Calton, 1984. 304 pages; 8 colour plates, over 100 line-drawings. £19.60.

All Poyser books have a pleasing 'feel' and show clearly the care and thought which has been put into their design. This latest addition to the Poyser list has the extra attraction of John Busby's evocative illustrations scattered liberally throughout the text. A centre section of eight colour plates portrays all of the 24 species of bee-eater (and most of their races) in the form of paintings by the author, Hilary Fry. Rumour has it that these were originally produced merely as guide-lines for the as-yet-unchosen artist to follow, but that the publisher decided to use them without commissioning copies from a recognised painter. How wise! Hilary Fry has—as one would expect from someone so intimately involved over many years with studying such an attractive group—an understanding and love of his subjects which has come through in these marvellous portraits. Of the world's 24 species, I have seen only eight, but the jizz of each of those is captured magnificently; and, looking at Hilary Fry's paintings, I am very tempted to go off in search of the other 16.

Although the book itself and the illustrations it contains are both so attractive, these are just the gilt on the gingerbread. Even undecorated, and in plain wrapping, the gingerbread would still satisfy even the most critical birdwatcher.

Bee-eaters are not only delightful to look at, with an interesting and elegant shape, agile and attractive flight, and beautiful plumage colorations, but they also have extraordinarily fascinating habits. Research, much of it by the author himself, has revealed some most unexpected social behaviour. Do you, for instance, know (or can you guess) why certain bee-eaters will allow some individuals (which may not be their close neighbours in the colony, and may not even be from the same colony) into their burrows, but eject others? No, the ones that are let in are not 'helpers' which are assisting in the feeding of the brood. No, they are not non-breeders. No, they are not necessarily related genetically to the owners of the nest-hole which they are allowed to enter. To find out the intriguing answer, you will have to read this book. In so doing, you will have enormous enjoyment, will learn a lot about bee-eaters, and will gain some understanding of the excitement which must spur on scientists, such as Dr Fry, who devote large portions of their lives to the study of wildlife.

This is one of those books which, once you have seen it, you will want to own. I cannot find a single aspect to criticise. It even includes a 'believe it or not' section (see illustration by John Busby) of aspects of behaviour reported but as yet unconfirmed. This is just one example from a book which not only looks nice, but is also a lot of fun to read.

J. T. R. SHARROCK



In need of confirmation. A Little Bee-eater reported carrying another in its beak¹⁹⁹, Swallow-taileds roosting on each other's backs and taking insects from flowers³⁸², Little Bee-eaters breeding in a weaverbird's old nest³⁸², a Rainbowbird using a twig to assist in excavating¹³⁶, a Red-bearded taking a scorpion, and a Carmine taking an insect from a Kori Bustard's beak¹¹³. Probably all of these reports contain errors of observation or interpretation.

Les Oiseaux de Montagne. By Jean-François Dejonghe. Illustrated by Michael Cambrony. Editions de Point Vétérinaire. Maisons-Alfort, 1984. 310 pages; 16 colour plates; 4 black-and-white plates; 70 text figures. Softback FF148.

This is the second book in a series 'Les oiseaux dans leur milieu naturel' (Birds in their natural habitat), which has no ready equivalent in English. The first *Les Oiseaux des Villes et des Villages* (Birds of town and village) was published in 1983 and won a prize: it is not difficult to see why. Approximately one-third of France is mountainous—the Pyrénées, Alps, Massif Central, Jura, Vosges and Corsica—and, although not specified by the title, the area covered is France and adjacent mountainous regions in Spain, Italy and Switzerland. The first three chapters, comprising half the book, form the real interest. Chapter one covers life in the mountains and the adaptations of birds enabling them to live there: resistance to cold, food preferences, and social/sexual behaviour. It includes such examples as the use of snow holes for roosting by grouse, food storage by Nutcrackers, the hierarchy of vultures at a carcass, the bone-breaking technique of Lammergeiers, pellets of Dippers, and drilling for sap by Three-toed Woodpeckers. Chapter two looks at the effects of man on the habitat, ranging from afforestation, disturbance and tourism, to the creation of national parks and reserves (including a nine-page gazetteer of reserves in France and adjacent countries), and the attempted reintroduction of several species. The author is not slow to condemn a Capercaillie reintroduction scheme where two different subspecies are involved. Chapter three concerns migration through the mountains, and compares the Alps and Pyrénées, as well as examining the effects of hunting.

Chapter four, the second half of the book, is a systematic list of species accounts. There is nothing new in the information, but the layout is a model of clarity, and the vital points are summarised diagrammatically (see example, for Ortolan Bunting). To complete this delightful pot-pourri, an appendix gives, among other things, nestbox designs for Dipper and Tengmalm's Owl! Last but not least, there are 16 attractive colour plates, and four pages of black-and-white photographs (including Corsican Nuthatch); and the text is liberally laced with fine drawings and clear diagrams.

It is refreshing to come across a novel approach in such a well-covered field as bird books, and this volume is packed with fascinating information not easily found elsewhere. It is rather expensive, but well worth considering, especially if you can read French.

IAN DAWSON



Fauna ČSSR: Ptáci—Aves. Part 3, vols. 1 & 2. Edited by Karel Hudec. Czechoslovak Academy of Science, Prague, 1983. 1,234 pages; 29 colour plates; 651 black-and-white photographs, maps and figures; many short tables. No price given.

This, the third and final part of the avifauna of Czechoslovakia, comes in two volumes. The first deals with 103 species (Cuckoo, owls, Nightjar, swifts, Kingfisher, Bee-eater, Roller,

Hoopoe, woodpeckers, larks, hirundines, pipits and wagtails, Waxwing, Dipper, Wren, accentors, Robin, chats and thrushes etc, warblers). The second comprises 67 species (flycatchers, tits, Nuthatch, Wallcreeper, treecreepers, Penduline Tit, Golden Oriole, shrikes, crows, starlings, sparrows, finches, buntings). Colour illustrations of all species are placed together at the back of volume 2, along with egg plates. The whole of the text is in Czechoslovakian and therefore unfortunately beyond the comprehension of the vast majority of European ornithologists, myself included. At the end of volume 2, however, there are 33 pages of species summaries in German, and it is mainly on these that this review is based.

My first reaction was one of frustration. These summaries are extremely short in most cases, and one also has continually to turn back to the pages and/or figures referred to—which is not made easier by the fact that the reference numbers to the figures and photographs are in every case incorrect! Nevertheless, the summaries do provide useful, albeit brief, information on, for example, general distribution and habitat, status and numbers, migration, dates etc, as well as on various aspects of breeding biology. Once one has ascertained how certain of the figures and tables work, there is much of interest to be gleaned on this latter subject, such as laying dates and the height of nests above the ground. Although world range maps are given for species that occur regularly in Czechoslovakia, only some species also have a map (*Atlas*-type) showing distribution in the country itself. This is a pity, for surely such maps covering all breeding species would have been a most useful addition for the west European ornithologist. On the other hand, the numerous maps of ringing recoveries are very welcome. The many black-and-white photographs vary in quality; they show mostly nests/eggs/habitat, and some form good reference material for actual nest sites (although in many cases some 'gardening' by the photographer is rather evident). The colour plates are not bad, but there are better ones; their appeal is aesthetic perhaps, but some—the woodpeckers, warblers and buntings—are well worth looking at more closely.

To judge from the admittedly brief German summaries, the score of authors have, under the reliable editorship of Karel Hudec, produced a work of some depth and value. Using the summaries and maps together, one can learn that in Czechoslovakia the Eagle Owl is surprisingly widespread and apparently not uncommon; that the River Warbler is also widespread and has increased in numbers; that Long-tailed Tits with characters of both races *caudatus* and *europaeus* occur in the country, which forms the overlap zone between the two races; and that the status of several species, such as Bonelli's Warbler, is not clearly understood.

If parts 1 and 2 are comparable, this new Czech avifauna, well-produced and printed (apart from the annoying errors in cross references), would appear to form a good standard work on the birds of a land-locked country not often visited by west European ornithologists. For it to be of real value, however, a good knowledge of German (or Czech!) is essential.

DAVID A. CHRISTIE

Robins. By Chris Mead. Illustrations by Kevin Baker. Whittet Books, London, 1984. 128 pages; over 70 line drawings. £4.95.

This little book on the Robin, attractive and lively, should have much popular appeal. Lavishly illustrated by line-drawings—often of cartoon type—the matter is laid out in magazine form. Subjects ranging from populations to folklore are interspersed with short snippets of information, sometimes cast in semi-humorous form. In short, the contents are as varied and unpredictable as are those in a Christmas stocking—something for all tastes.

Of the serious matter, the longer pieces include items on distribution, habitat, migration (illustrated by interesting maps), plumage, and moult. Clear exposition in these sections make an amount of scientific and statistically based information intelligible and interesting to the ordinary reader such as myself. The treatment of other items is, however, uneven. In particular, the various forms of behaviour concerned with care of the plumage, known collectively as feather maintenance, are dealt with perfunctorily. Some statements on bathing, for instance, are ambiguous or at variance with other recorded findings; they need to be substantiated either by descriptions or references. Sunning is not mentioned at all. I was not aware that, in the case of Robins, dusting as well as anting had been recorded. Since it is rare for a passerine species to do both, further comment would have been helpful.

Despite these reservations, there is much of value and interest in the book. This being so, the whole text would have been enhanced by a reference list.

J. M. STANTON



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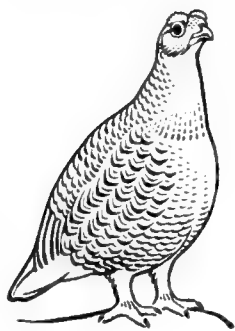
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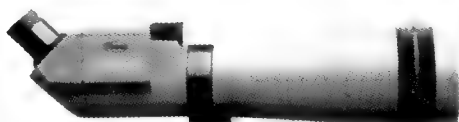
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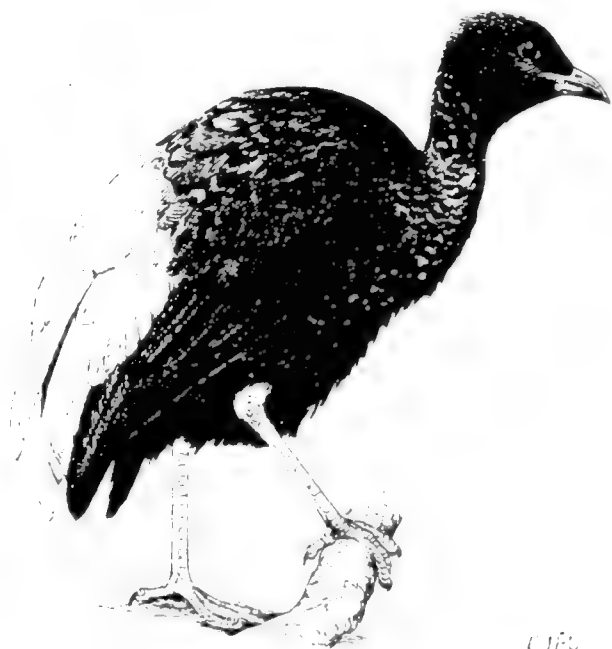
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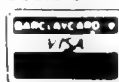
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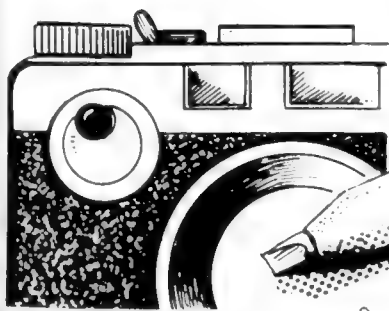
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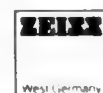
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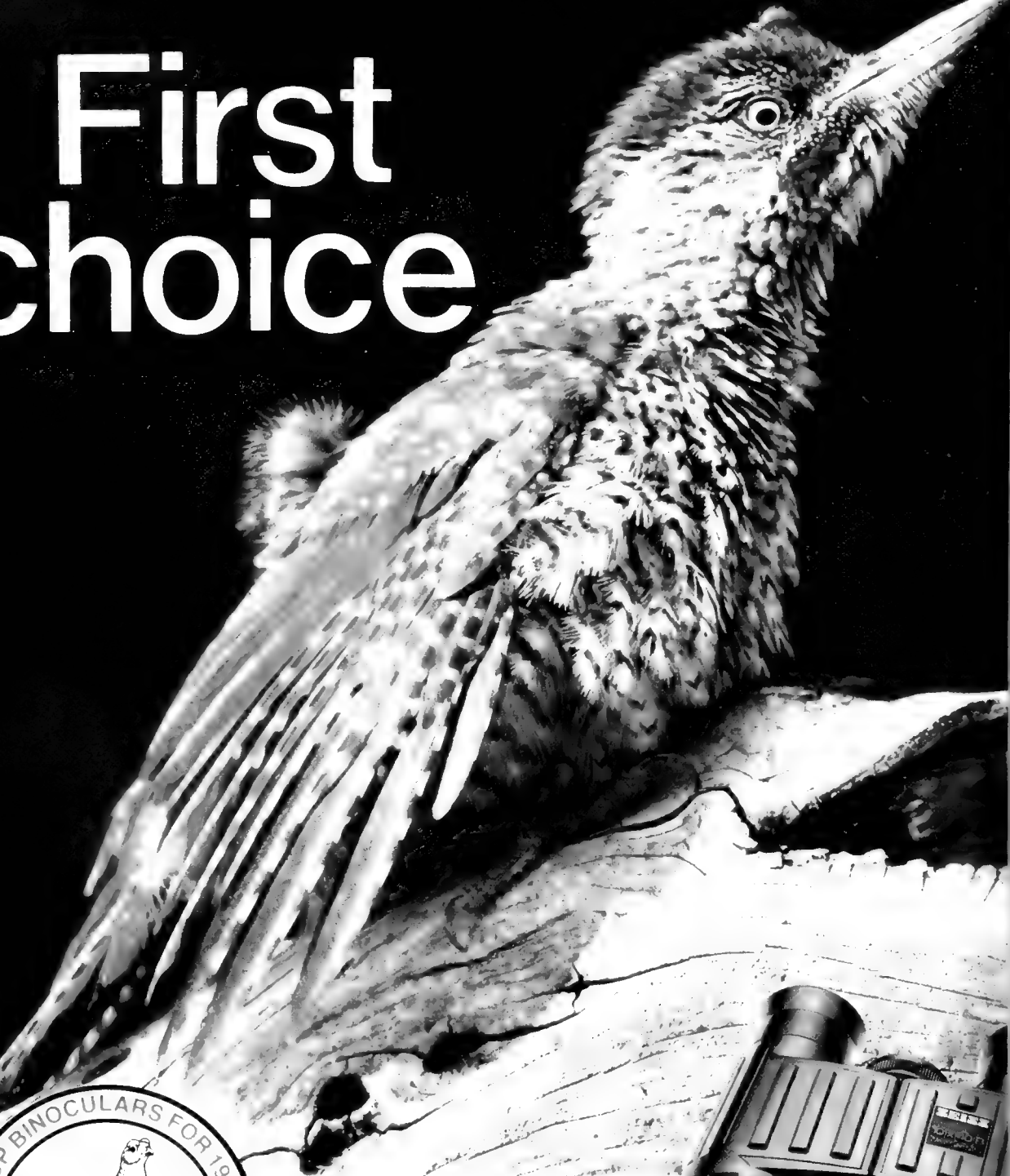
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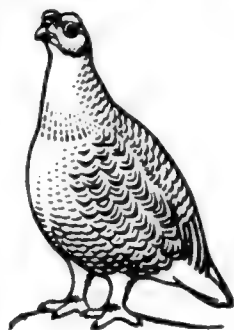
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British Birds

VOLUME 78 NUMBER 5 MAY 1985

Sponsored by



This, the ninth annual competition to find the 'Bird Photograph of the Year', was again sponsored by Matthew Gloag & Son Ltd, the proprietors of *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky. This support not only enables us to run the competition and present the prize and trophy to the winning photographer, but also makes it possible to publish the top photographs in colour.

A total of 129 transparencies was submitted by 50 photographers. Although this was slightly lower than last year, the general standard of the entries goes up and up each year. This makes the task of judging exceedingly difficult (but also very enjoyable). We have remarked on this in several recent years, but in none has this 'strength in depth' been more apparent than in the present selection. Any of the top 18 would have been a worthy winner, and—as every year—it took a vote to settle the placings. The eventual winner, however, headed the field by a clear margin, and with two judges voting it in first place.

The original short-list of 30 was further sifted to give the following top 18 transparencies:

- 1st BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1985. Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* by C. R. Knights (plate 88)
- 2nd Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* by Dr Kevin Carlson (plate 89)
- 3rd Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedipnemus* by Gordon Langsbury (plate 90)
- 4th Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* by Roger Wilmshurst (plate 92)
- 5th Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* by C. G. Packham (plate 91)
- 6th Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* by Jan Schram (plate 93)
- 7th= Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* by Roger Tidman
- 7th= Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* by Martin B. Withers
- 9th Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* by M. C. Wilkes
- 10th Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* by Gordon Langsbury
- 11th Swallow *Hirundo rustica* by Dr Kevin Carlson
- 12th Jays *Garrulus glandarius* by E. A. Janes
- 13th Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* by Oene Moedt
- 14th Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* by A. P. Barnes
- 15th Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* by Ian Appleyard
- 16th Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* by A. P. Barnes
- 17th Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* by A. R. Hamblin
- 18th Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* by Neill King

The original selection of 30 included transparencies submitted by another four photographers: B. Holt, Dave Pullan, Marc Raes and G. P. Sutton.

Three photographers had the remarkable achievement of having all three of their entries selected in the initial short-list of 30 (Dr Kevin Carlson, E. A. Janes and M. C. Wilkes) and three photographers, it will be noticed, had two of their entries in the top 18 (A. P. Barnes, Dr Kevin Carlson and Gordon Langsbury).

Looking at the entries—the highlights of the year's achievements for so many bird-photographers—was truly a privilege. We noted that the trend away from nest photography continues, although that will not be immediately apparent to our readers. Indeed, our winning photograph (plate 88) is of a bird at the nest, though one that epitomises everything that we look for in the winner of this competition: good composition, the bird not too large (or too small) in relation to its surroundings, and attractive colours all add up to a picture that is a delight. Above all, however, it records a fascinating (and little understood) aspect of the behaviour of Great Crested Grebes, that of feeding feathers to their newly hatched young. The one-day-old, stripily plumaged chick is being presented with a small feather, carefully chosen for size, plucked by the adult from its breast. Although this action has perhaps been photographed before, we do not believe that this shot of it could be bettered.

The runner-up, Dr Kevin Carlson, must be despairing! For the third successive year, he has taken second place, so surely takes first prize for consistency. For the second successive year, we also have a photograph of a pair of Pheasants in our published selection. These were photographed at bait; the dominant male of those present became interested in one of the females, and after a brief display mated with her, providing a photograph as interesting as it is colourful (plate 89).

Only just pipped to third place was Gordon Langsbury, with a superb photograph (obtained with the necessary NCC permission) of a pair of Stone-curlews changing over at the nest (plate 90). We were impressed with the composition, sharpness and clarity—of both birds (depth-of-field problems usually result in one of the pair in this situation being slightly out of focus)—one pecking at the ground as it leaves the other to settle on the nest.

A criticism of nest-photography is that it has 'all been done before'; this applies particularly to common species, such as the Chaffinch. We felt, though, that Roger Wilmshurst's photograph (plate 92) must be one of the best and most interesting ever of this species. The cock passes food to the hen, perhaps for her in turn to feed the youngsters. All are clearly seen, as is the mossy nest. Superb! That such a photograph comes 'only' fourth in our selection exemplifies the astonishingly high standard of the competition.

Not many British bird-photographers are lucky enough to have had the opportunity to photograph an Eagle Owl as did C. G. Packham in France in March 1984 (plate 91). The fox *Vulpes vulpes*, shot by a local farmer, was set out for the owl, which had been taking bait at this site for some time. It was a bold attempt to photograph it in daylight and against the light, but one that has come off, to provide us with this striking shot of a magnificent bird.

The final photograph selected for publication is the fine study of a Bee-eater by Jan Schram (plate 93), photographed, from a hide, in Corsica.



38. Adult Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* passing breast feather to its one-day-old young, Norfolk, May 1984 (C. R. Knights) (Canon FL 300 mm Canon and 2 × converter, Kodachrome 64).

39. Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* mating, Norfolk, April 1984 (K. J. Carlson) (Nikon FE2, 135 mm Nikkor, Kodachrome 64).





90. Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedinenus* after change-over at nest, Norfolk, May 1984 (Gordon Langsbury) (Nikon F3, 300mm Nikkor, Kodachrome 64)

91. Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* at dead fox *Vulpes vulpes*, France, March 1984 (C. G. Packham) (Canon A1, 400mm Canon, Kodachrome 64)





2. Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* at nest, West Sussex, June 1984. Roger Wilmshurst. (Pentax 6 × 7, 240mm Schneider, Metz 402 flash, Fujichrome)

A delightful bird, the interest of the shot being considerably enhanced by its briefly spread tail, so well caught by the photographer.

As usual, all 19 photographers whose work was short-listed will be welcome to attend the Press Reception for the award presentation to the winner, which will be reported on in a later issue.

We look forward to next year's competition, and hope very much that all this year's runners-up will be entering again.



93. Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, Corsica, May 1984 (Jan Schram) (Nikon FE, 600 mm Novolux Ektachrome 200)

Finally, we must again remind photographers of the legal requirements of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), and that the welfare of the birds must always be put first.

R. J. CHANDLER, ERIC HOSKING, J. T. R. SHARROCK and DON SMITH

The Choughs of Bardsey



P. J. Roberts

In recent years, several studies on the Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* have shed light on the species' breeding ecology and distribution in Britain and Ireland (Bullock *et al.* 1983a), and given details of feeding and foods taken (Bullock 1980; Warnes 1982; Roberts 1982, 1983). This paper gives information on population structure, dispersal and biometrics: spheres in which there are few reliable published data. It is based on observations of individually colour-ringed Choughs on Bardsey, Gwynedd, over a six-year period 1978-83. When studying a small and long-lived population of birds, data are sparse and slow in accumulating; the results are, therefore, preliminary and tentative in some aspects. They are presented here as part of a general overview of Chough dispersal and population dynamics throughout Britain and Ireland.

Background and study methods

Bardsey is an island of 180 ha, 3 km off the tip of the Llyn Peninsula in Gwynedd, North Wales. Choughs have traditionally bred on the island and adjacent mainland coastline. Recent national surveys (Rolfe 1966; Bullock *et al.* 1983a) have shown stable numbers throughout an unchanged breeding range, including about 50 pairs in Caernarvonshire (Gwynedd). In this period, numbers on Bardsey have increased from two to four pairs (1954-78) to five to seven (1979-83). Breeding numbers and ringing totals since the observatory was founded in 1953 are shown in table 1. During 1954-83, owing to some nest sites being inaccessible, and to the closure of the observatory in 1971-73, a maximum of 40-45 nestlings (about 20% of the total) may have fledged unringed. Since 1978, all Choughs ringed have been given three colour rings to enable individual recognition in the field. During 1978-83, a maximum of 10% of nestlings may have gone unringed. Within this study period, 29 full-grown Choughs were also ringed (see table 1); these, caught mainly in late autumn, represent about 30% of all full-grown Choughs ever ringed in Britain and Ireland.

The island was manned annually from March to November or December; midwinter records are, therefore, scant or lacking. All casual observations of colour-ringed Choughs were recorded daily by visitors and

Table 1. Ringing totals and numbers of nests of Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* on Bardsey, Gwynedd, since 1954

Year	No. nests	NO. RINGED	
		Nestlings	Full-grown
1954	2	8	
1955	2	8	
1956	2	3	
1957	2	1	
1958	2	3	
1959	1	4	
1960	2	7	
1961	2	9	
1962	3	9	
1963	3	4	
1964	4	3	
1965	3	4	1
1966	4	4	
1967	4	5	2
1968	2	3	
1969	3	6	
1970	3	8	
1974	3	7	
1975	4	5	
1976	3	5	
1977	3	7	
1978	4	15	15
1979	5	11	11
1980	6	6	1
1981	7	20	2
1982	6	15	
1983	6	10	

staff. Additionally, I made weekly Chough ‘forays’ for at least half a day, specifically to observe and record the population. With so many observer-hours on such a small and discrete area, it was possible to gain an accurate picture of presence or absence of individuals. Any uncertain or incomplete records were excluded from this analysis. Thousands of further observations were made on all aspects of behaviour, and some of this anecdotal information is included where relevant. All data are put into a national context by reference to other Chough studies, British and Irish ringing recoveries, and county records.

Results

Mortality and longevity

Fig. 1 shows recoveries by month of all Bardsey-ringed Choughs. Even from this small sample, it is clear that there is a high mortality of young in summer, when family groups have broken up, as noted by Holyoak (1971) for other members of the crow family (Corvidae). Death of older birds occurs mainly in winter months (the recoveries in October and April refer to long-dead individuals, whose actual date of death is unknown). A very similar pattern of mortality was shown by Bullock *et al.* (1983a) using data from the whole of the United Kingdom, although their winter peak was slightly greater than that for first-autumn Choughs.

Bullock *et al.* (1983a) tentatively suggested a first-year mortality, based on all BTO ringing recoveries, of 85%, with a similar figure for second-year mortality. By using sightings of colour-ringed young surviving to adulthood, it was possible to calculate maximum mortality rates for each of five years in the study period, thus adding to and refining the calculations of Bullock *et al.* Although the Bardsey data are few and potentially unreliable, the large amount of time spent observing and searching for colour-ringed Choughs gives a little more validity to the figures. Table 2 shows that, in three of the five years, first-year mortality was below the figure given by Bullock *et al.* (1983a), and in 1979 was at most 45%. Obviously, such a small sample size can give widely varying results, but at least in some years survival was quite high in this population. The difference in first-year mortality between the years 1978-80 and 1981-82 is significant. This is reflected in fig. 2, where life histories of 50% of young ringed in 1978-80 continue over two and three years, compared with just one such individual for the period 1981-83 (observations continuing into 1984 to allow for further sightings). In addition, the number of fledglings known to have died in their first year varied from nil to two for each year in the study period, except 1981 when six were found, four of these within two or three months of fledging (see fig. 2).

Table 2. Mortality rates of Choughs *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* on Bardsey, Gwynedd, 1978-82

For subsequent years, one year is calculated as a 12-month period from time of fledging.
Mortality 77.6% in year 1; 46.7% in year 2

Year of fledging	No. fledged	NO. SEEN ALIVE IN SUBSEQUENT YEARS						First-year mortality (%)
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1978	15	4	4	2	1	1	—	73.4
1979	11	6	1	—	—	—	—	45.4
1980	6	2	2	1	—	—	—	66.7
1981	20	1	1	—	—	—	—	95.0
1982	15	2	—	—	—	—	—	85.7
TOTALS	67	15	8	3	1	1	0	

Reasons for this large difference in first-year mortality between the two periods are not known. Personal observations, however, suggest that it is due at least partly to climatic conditions adversely affecting food supplies at the times of the usual peak mortality as shown in fig. 1. The early-autumn peak in first-year mortality is due largely to the juveniles' inexperience in finding food without parental help at a time when food availability is 'patchy'; staple prey items such as ants (Formicoidae) and beetles (Coleoptera) are often in poor supply (Roberts 1982, 1983). The winter mortality has already been attributed by Holyoak (1971) to the Chough's specialised feeding requirements, and Bullock *et al.* (1983b & in press) also suggested that hard winters could have serious effects on mortality if feeding became poor. These natural factors were thought to be exacerbated in the years 1981-83, when more severe and extreme weather conditions

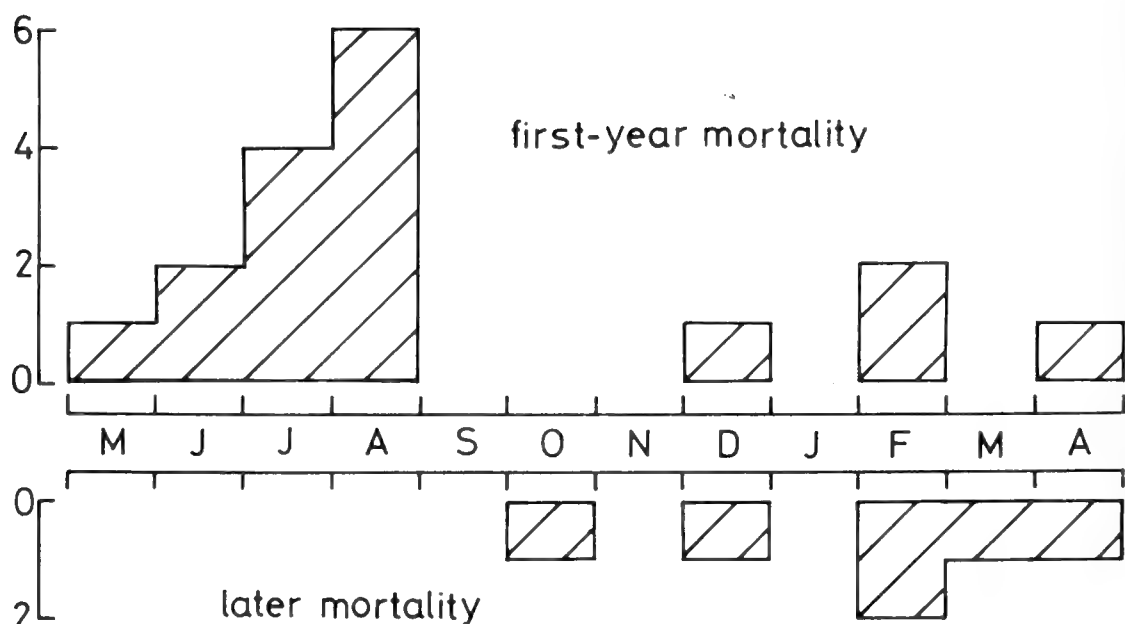


Fig. 1. Monthly distribution of mortality of Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* on Bardsey, Gwynedd, based on 23 ringing recoveries

disrupted the complex life cycles of invertebrate prey in summer, making food more difficult to find in winter.

When data for all five years are combined, the average mortality in the first year is 77.6%, very close to the figures given by Bullock *et al.* (1983a). Calculations of second-year mortality are very spurious, but in one year produced a maximum of 83%, and averaged 46.7% for the whole study period.

A male Bardsey Chough had the greatest *proven* longevity of any wild Chough. Ringed as an adult in March 1965, it bred successfully on the island until its death in December 1981, when at least 17 years old. Darke (1971) suggested that the last surviving Cornish Chough was one of a pair that last bred in 1947, remaining subsequently as non-breeders; it died in 1973, when at least 27 years old.

Social structure

Colour-ringing of nestlings and full-grown Choughs has allowed preparation of life histories for 76 individuals, from which details of social structure and behaviour can be deduced. Fig. 2 shows the known histories of those ringed as nestlings and gives valuable facts about known-age Choughs. Fig. 3 shows life histories of Choughs ringed as full-grown in autumn (mainly October and November). As there seems to be no reliable way of ageing Choughs after about September, most of those caught were of unknown age; all that could be deduced was that they were not Bardsey-bred, as these were all ringed. Any first-years would by now have got past the critical early-autumn mortality period illustrated in fig. 1. Their chances of survival might be expected to be higher, and this is to some extent borne out by the greater proportion of birds in fig. 3 with longer histories. Of the full-grown Choughs trapped, seven were from the island's breeding population.

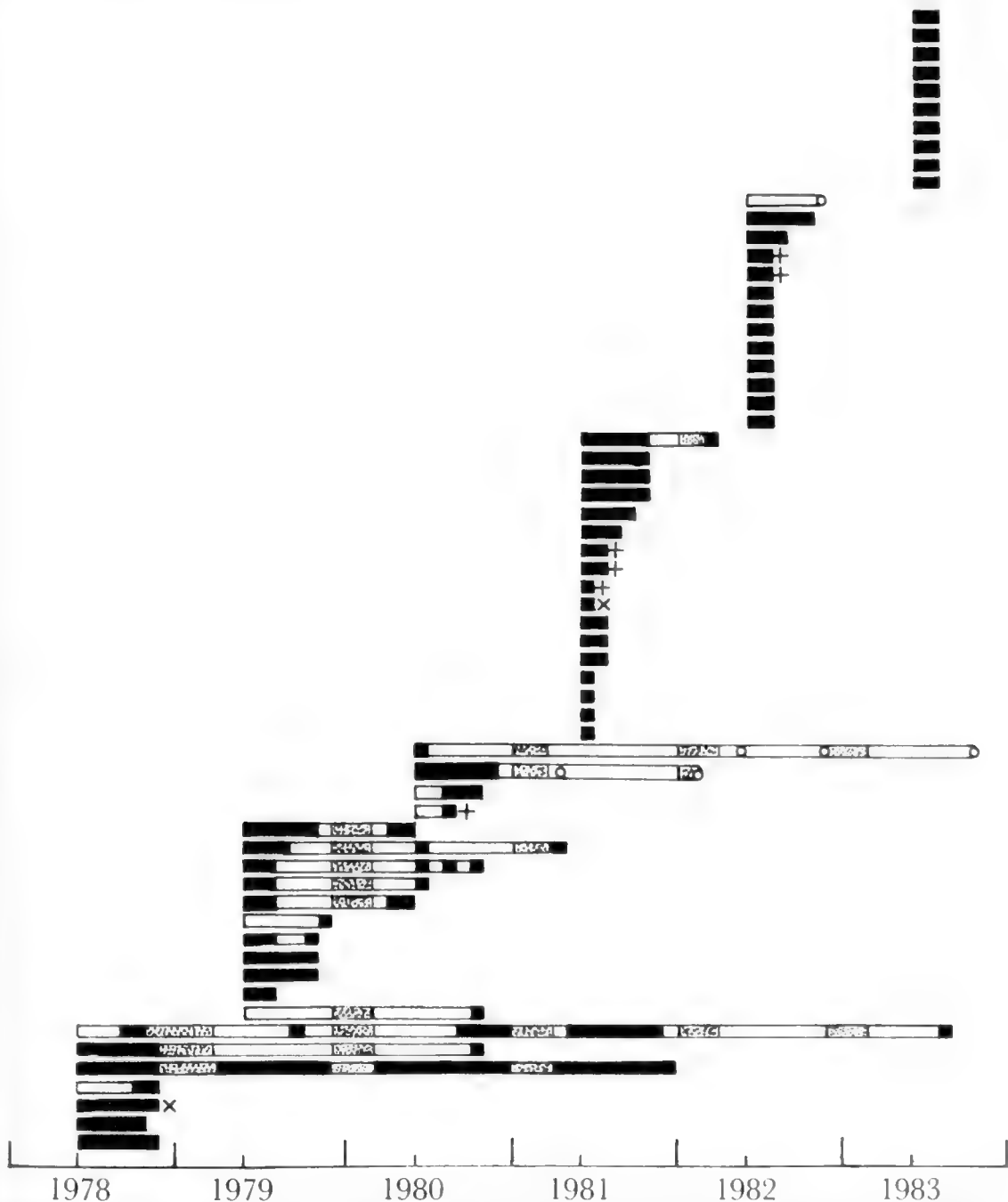


Fig. 2. Sightings of Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* colour-ringed as nestlings on Bardsey, Gwynedd, 1978-83. Life histories start in June each year, at the time of fledging. Black bars = bird present on island; open bars = bird absent from island; o = sighting on mainland; + = found dead on island; x = found dead on mainland; stipple = no observations

BREEDING INDIVIDUALS

Pairs remained together all year. They freely joined feeding flocks at all times, but were discernible as pairs within the larger group. This was suggested also from observations in other areas by Williamson (1959), Coombes (1978), Bracegirdle (1964) and Praz (1971). Breeding pairs appeared totally sedentary, remaining on the island throughout the year. Praz (1971), watching Choughs in winter in the Valais region of the Alps, noted breeding pairs wintering at or near the nest site, both alone and in flocks with other Choughs. This has possibly given rise to claims by many authors (e.g. Goodwin 1976; Coombes 1978) of sedentariness for the species as a whole.



94. Nestling Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, Gwynedd, May 1982 (P. J. Roberts)

At least during the study period, pairs were completely faithful to one another, and to their nest sites. Most sites are 'traditional', several being used annually. The farthest any pair moved was about 10m within the same boulder-beach nesting site. Only one individual among the five to seven breeding pairs was known to have changed during the study period: this was due to the death of the 17-year-old male mentioned above; the female retained the nest site, attracted a mate, and bred successfully without missing a season. Not all pairs bred annually. One marked pair bred in 1980, then held territory at the same site for two subsequent years without any attempt to breed. This interrupted breeding has not been recorded previously, although Holyoak (1972) noted non-breeders holding territory. Apart from a 20% chance of an unringed Bardsey individual being present, observations showed that none of the breeding Choughs was reared on the island. Cowdy (1962) also noted a total absence of Bardsey-reared Choughs in the population in 1961.

DISPERSAL

It is clear from fig. 2 that most Choughs were not seen beyond their first few months after fledging, although there is a great deal of annual variation (see Mortality and longevity). Observations of a total of 17 family groups over four breeding seasons showed that young stayed with parents as a family unit for up to 43 days after fledging (Holyoak 1972 recorded periods of 28-35 days on the Calf of Man); after 48-50 days, young were seen on their own, and some had left the island. This corresponds well with the time of known highest first-year mortality as shown by ringing recoveries. Fig. 2 illustrates the diversity of dispersal patterns of those surviving first-year individuals.

Three birds (k, l & m in fig. 2) left the island during their first autumn

(from August to October), were seen in mainland flocks, and never returned. Many other fledglings (b-j in fig. 2) left in their first autumn, but returned intermittently in that same autumn and in later years. Of 15 fledglings, one was absent only in August; 11 were absent in August and September, returning in October; and two were absent from August to October, returning in November. Several of these disappeared again, but returned sporadically in subsequent summers and autumns (e.g., c in fig. 2). At the other extreme, bird a in fig. 2 remained permanently on the island, in the non-breeding flock, for three-and-a-half years, before either dying or leaving the island. By the end of the study period, none of the colour-ringed young was still on the island, and there was no evidence of the presence of any earlier-ringed young either; this is in strong contrast to the highly sedentary nature of the breeders.

The pattern of occurrence and the life histories of the unaged Choughs in fig. 3 are very similar to those of the young in fig. 2 which survived beyond their first autumn. The largest number of Choughs occur on the island in late autumn: representing a dispersal from the mainland to Bardsey at the same time as Bardsey young are dispersing away from the island. The sedentary nature of the breeding birds, and biometric data (see page 228), suggest that many of these unaged autumn arrivals are first-years dispersing from nesting areas on the mainland, mixed with a few older, non-breeding individuals. Two birds (a & b in fig. 3) remained in the island non-breeding flock for three years after capture; bird b returned intermittently in the fourth year, and was then seen back on the mainland. Birds d-h in fig. 3 remained in the non-breeding flock for one to two years, and were then seen sporadically in their third and fourth years, with bird g on the mainland later; birds c and i were seen on the island only in the autumn of capture, but were found on the mainland again respectively four and one years later.

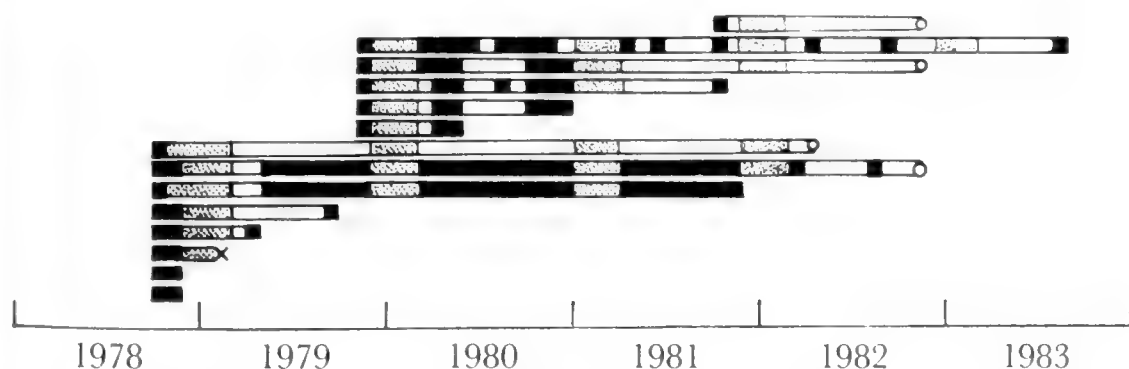


Fig. 3. Sightings of Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* colour-ringed as unaged, full-grown, on Bardsey, Gwynedd. Life histories start in October/November each year, at time of ringing. Black bars = bird present on island; open bars = bird absent from island; o = sighting on mainland; x = found dead on mainland; stipple = no observations

PAIRING AND FIRST BREEDING

Definite ages for first breeding by Choughs were unknown until recently. Bird 1 in fig. 2 was seen on three occasions over two years at Llangrannog, Cardiganshire; on the last occasion, as a three-year-old, it was breeding. On Islay, Argyll, J. M. Warnes (*in litt.*) proved breeding in the second year.

Other evidence from Bardsey suggests that many Choughs may not breed until their fourth year or later: for example, bird-a in fig. 2 could not have bred until at least its fourth year, when it disappeared from the non-breeding flock. Similarly, birds a & b in fig. 3 did not breed in the three years they were resident on the island, thus making them at least four years old before they could have bred (assuming that they were first-years when caught, and that they bred immediately after leaving the island). Bird c in fig. 3 was found breeding on the mainland four years after having been ringed: the site had been closely watched each year, and the bird had not bred there before; given the nest-site tenacity of breeding Choughs, it is unlikely that it had bred elsewhere in the intervening period, which further suggests an age of first breeding of at least four years.

Holyoak (1972) suggested an age of first breeding of three years, on the assumption that the Chough is similar to other, better-studied, members of the crow family; he also noted that some first-years were already paired. With the individually-marked Bardsey Choughs, however, it was clear that 'first pairing' was not so simple as this. Known one- and two-year-olds were seen to go through pair-bonding and pairing activities, such as mutual feeding, allopreening and other displays. These individuals were not all paired, but were clearly promiscuous: several examples of one bird being apparently paired with another, then that other seen to be paired with two further, different, Choughs in later weeks, indicate more exploratory activity than pairing for life. That many Bardsey Choughs did not breed until four years old may reflect the more dense population on the island compared with some other parts of the British and Irish range: young Choughs may be unable to compete for territory, and nest-site availability may be limited, causing delayed breeding and perhaps greater dispersal.

95. Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* feeding on beach, Gwynedd, November 1979 (P. J. Roberts)



FLOCKING AND ROOSTING

Few references have been made to size and function of non-breeding flocks, so much a feature of the Chough population. In the Abruzzi National Park, non-breeders were noted as forming 20% of the total population in 1975 (Lovari 1976a); in the UK, 30% has been quoted (Holyoak 1972; Rolfe 1966). During 1953-83, on Bardsey, the figure varied greatly from year to year, ranging from 20% to 60%. Within the study period 1978-83, the largest non-breeding flocks were recorded in 1978-80, when first-year mortality was significantly lower than in 1981-83 (see pages 218-220). This suggests that numbers of non-breeders may be related in part to better first-year survival, resulting in more 'spare' birds in the population as a whole.

In Italy, these non-breeding summer flocks were noted by Lovari (1976b, 1978) as the largest gatherings of the year, the birds tending to split into smaller groups and pairs at other seasons. On Bardsey, maximum annual flock size has occurred in all months, but with distinct influxes and flocking in September and October in most years. This is due partly to intensive feeding activity on a sandy beach rich in invertebrate foods, but such larger autumn and winter flocks are also recorded at several other UK localities which have less of a focal point for feeding.

Roosting behaviour is very variable according to time of year and to age and status of individuals. The pattern of roosting over the year seems generally to follow the pattern below.

Communal winter roosts holding up to 50 or more Choughs have been recorded at several localities (*contra* Coombes 1978). These are regularly used from October to March (I. Bullock *in litt.*), and can include individuals of all ages; they may be used sporadically by some birds of all ages from August onwards. On Bardsey, a large area of open, east-facing cliff was used at least from August to November, when observations for the winter ceased. Individually-marked Choughs could be picked out by torch-light; these included first-years and variously aged non-breeders, but not breeders. During this same period, nest sites and surrounds were also checked, but no breeders were found here either.

During the breeding season, non-breeders used a variety of loose summer roosts. Breeders roosted at or near the nest site according to their stage of breeding; as chicks hatched and grew, so adults moved off the nest site to nearby ledges within the area. Cowdy (1962) noted that, on Bardsey, fledged young and their parents roosted at or near the nest site while they remained as a family unit into July. Williamson (1959) confirmed this for the Isle of Man, adding that, by late August, breeding Choughs had moved to ledges farther from the nest site.

Movements

Fig. 4 shows all recoveries of Bardsey-ringed Choughs, and sightings of colour-ringed individuals away from the island. Both types of record reflect a similar pattern. The majority of birds did not move far (up to 20km). Three were recovered at longer distances: two 46km along the Llyn Peninsula, and one 142km away in Liverpool (the farthest recovery for any Chough). Ringing recoveries for other localities indicate generally shorter

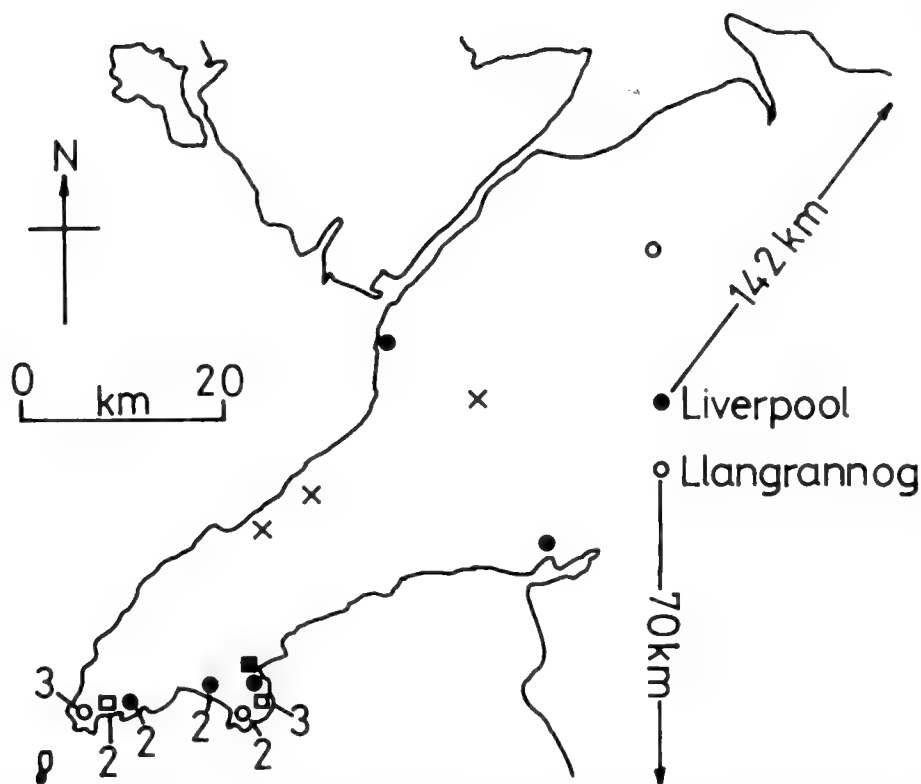


Fig. 4. Dispersal of Choughs *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax* ringed on Bardsey, Gwynedd. o = live (ringed as nestling); ● = dead (ringed as nestling); × = live (unaged); □ = live (ringed as full-grown); ■ = dead (ringed as full-grown)

movements: the majority from the Irish Republic, Islay and the Isle of Man are less than 10km, with a few up to 27km. Other notable recoveries are of an Anglesey Chough found 32km along the North Wales coast, four in Europe 25km, 40km, 50km and 60km from the ringing sites, and one in Switzerland 130km from the ringing site (Busse 1969).

Sightings of colour-ringed Choughs were up to 20km distant, within the breeding range on the Llyn Peninsula, and also 30km and 45km away in Snowdonia. Condry (1981) suggested that coastal-breeding Choughs in North Wales might well disperse inland to the smaller and slightly less successful Snowdonia population; these records add weight to this theory. The farthest definite sighting of a Bardsey Chough was 70km south, at Llangrannog in Cardigan Bay (bird 1 in fig. 2). There are also two reports, not fully confirmed, of Bardsey Choughs on Islay and in Pembrokeshire, respectively 340km and 160km distant.

Ringing recoveries all comprised dead or dying birds, mostly in their first autumn. This could be dismissed as an enforced dispersal of 'weak' or 'inferior' individuals unable to compete, and doomed to die. While this may be true in some cases, the sightings of colour-ringed Choughs give a more balanced and hopeful picture. Although they, too, were mainly of first-years, some were of surviving and healthy individuals which had successfully joined other populations. The three distant sightings were all of Choughs associating with breeding birds as 'helpers', showing some interest in pairing, or eventually breeding. The Chough seen at Llangrannog had spent its first autumn on Bardsey, having dispersed to Llangrannog by the following spring: it bred after two years and has remained there since.



Fig. 5. Records of Choughs *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* away from breeding range in Britain and Ireland since 1960. Black areas = breeding range; + = single record; ++ = four records; hatching = several records in area

Fig. 5 shows the present breeding range of the Chough in Britain and Ireland, and records away from this range since 1960. It illustrates clearly the species' dispersive ability. Bullock *et al.* (1983a) showed that this range had changed little over the past 20 years, since the last survey (Rolfe 1966) and compared with the *Atlas* (Sharrock 1976). Thus, the records collected from county recorders have all emanated from a closely similar breeding distribution, regardless of which year they relate to. All accepted county records are included, except those considered by recorders to refer to escaped birds. Some areas have several undated records adjacent to the breeding range. Records, all of live Choughs, occur in all months, with no apparent pattern, some individuals staying for several months in the same area.

It is apparent that there are many sightings at considerable distance from the nearest breeding site. Of the Scottish records, the two Orkney ones are 360km from the nearest breeders on Islay. The east coast of England records are 210km from the nearest (Isle of Man) population. The Cornwall and Devon sightings are 100km from the nearest breeders in Pembrokeshire. The bulk of records, however, come from the east shores of the Irish Sea, bordering Lancashire and Cumbria. These birds are likely to be equally of Isle of Man or North Wales origin. The records from the east coast of Ireland are of interest, but it is difficult to know whether they relate to Irish breeders or not. All are nearer to the British breeding populations (i.e. Scottish, Manx or Welsh), up to 80km away by sea. Goodwin (1976) stated that the Chough is extremely sedentary, and mentioned its reluctance to colonise any of the other Canary islands 40km across the sea from its stronghold on Palma. The individual on Barra, Outer Hebrides, however, must have made a substantial sea-crossing (fig. 5). Several Lancashire and Cumbria records involved Choughs which appeared at the same time as, and mixed with, other corvids from a westerly (Isle of Man?) direction. The Irish record from Houth Head, Dublin (the first for 70 years on the Irish east coast), was seen flying with auks (Alcidae) and Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* after a night of easterly gales, suggesting a crossing from Wales. Eight recent instances of BTO ringing recoveries of other crow species also support the idea that crossings of the Irish and other seas are not unusual for crows. Six Jackdaws *Corvus monedula* ringed in Wexford, southeast Ireland, were found in various parts of Wales and one in north Yorkshire. A Rook *C. frugilegus*, also ringed in Wexford, was found in North Wales, whilst two Ravens *C. corax* crossed in the other direction: one from Kintyre, Strathclyde, to Northern Ireland, and the other from North Wales to Dublin. Long-distance movements of Choughs are not a new phenomenon: several older records relate to movements of at least 150-300km over the past century, when the species' range in Britain and Ireland was more extensive.

It is evident that Choughs will make sea-crossings, and that there is much more mobility, at least from first-years and non-breeders, in the British and Irish population than is at first apparent. Fears of inbreeding in a somewhat fragmented breeding range seem unfounded, and the possibility of recolonisation of former breeding areas is quite real, given that suitable habitat still remains or can be created.

Biometrics

When full-grown Choughs were trapped (mostly in October and November), data were collected on their weight and on their length of bill and wing. Both known-age and unaged individuals were caught, some retrapped several times over long periods. Bill was measured from tip to feathering, and wing was measured as 'maximum chord' (see Svensson 1984). Although the sample is small, the data are, I believe, the most comprehensive and reliable yet available.

Table 3 compares these data with those from various other sources. Witherby *et al.* (1941) measured wings of eight males and five females by 'standard chord', a method rarely used on live birds today and one which

Table 3. Wing lengths and bill lengths (mm) and weights (g) of male and female Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

All data refer to British race *P. p. pyrrhocorax*, except Schifferli & Lang (*P. p. erythroramphus*). Wing length measured by 'maximum chord' for Bardsey, Calf of Man, Svensson and British Museum (skins); 'standard chord' for Witherby *et al.*; not known for Schifferli & Lang and Vaurie. Bill length measured from tip to feathering in all except Schifferli & Lang (method not known), and Calf of Man (tip to skull). Bardsey, Calf of Man and Vaurie data from definite adults. Sample size not known for Svensson

	Wing	MALE Bill	Weight	Wing	FEMALE Bill	Weight
BARDSEY						
Mean	297	49.5	366	274	46.0	309
Range	289-304	46-52	350-380	266-278	44-47	285-325
Sample size	6	6	4	6	6	5
WITHERBY <i>et al.</i> (1941)						
Mean	—	—	—	—	—	—
Range	257-281	41-49	—	245-271	39.5-48	—
Sample size	8	8	—	5	5	—
BRITISH MUSEUM						
Mean	276	46.7	—	260	44.5	—
Range	260-281	42.50	—	249-269	41-51	—
Sample size	7	7	—	10	10	—
VAURIE (1954)						
Mean	276	54.7	—	271.5	52.0	—
Range	268-293	51-59	—	266-278	50-53	—
Sample size	8	8	—	5	5	—
SVENSSON (1984)						
	270	—	—	258	—	—
SCHIFFERLI & LANG						
(1940)	309	52.5	350	295	50.5	293
Sample size	1	1	1	1	1	1
CALF OF MAN						
Sample size	286	56	335	261	53.5	302
	1	1	1	1	1	1

gives shorter results. Their figures do not fall into the same range as that from Bardsey; their birds are also unaged, hence perhaps the overlap in range between the sexes, but there is still a clear difference in size between male and female. Measurements taken by myself from ten female and seven male skins of the British race *P. p. pyrrhocorax* in the British Museum (Natural History) again show this clear size difference; as with Witherby *et al.*'s (1941) and more recently with Svensson's (1984) data, however, the range is quite different from my own on Bardsey, as it fails to take into account size differences between first-year and older birds. Mayaud (1933) stressed the difference in size between adult and first-year Choughs, but quoted only Witherby *et al.*'s measurements for British individuals. Data from Vaurie (1954) were for fully adult British birds (method of measurement unknown). His data for females fit my own almost exactly, but those for males are much smaller, for which there is no apparent explanation.

Fig. 6 shows wing length and weight of adult Choughs trapped on Bardsey and the Calf of Man; fig. 7 shows wing and bill lengths of all Choughs trapped on Bardsey. I found no overlap in wing length or weight

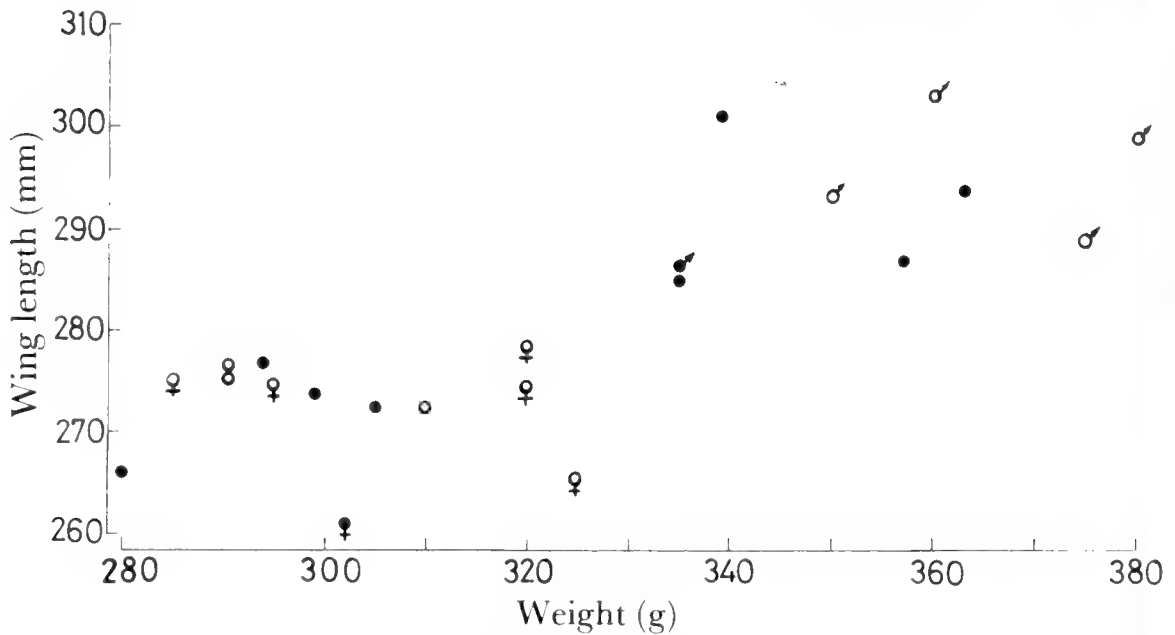


Fig 6. Wing length and weight of adult Choughs *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* on Bardsey, Gwynedd, and Calf of Man, Isle of Man. o = unsexed; ● Calf of Man

between the sexes, males all being distinctly larger, although there was a 1-mm overlap in bill length. The latter is *contra* Goodwin (1976), who suggested that sexual size difference in Choughs is most apparent in bill length. Measurements (by unknown methods) of a breeding pair of the race *P. p. erythroramphus* in Switzerland by Shifferli & Lang (1940) (table 3) support my findings of a big difference in weight between the sexes; a smaller, but noticeable difference in wing length; but little difference in bill length. Measurements from the Calf of Man are the most comparable with those for Bardsey, being taken recently from live British Choughs. They give closely similar results to those from Bardsey, the unsexed adults falling into two clearly differentiated size groups, and the two sexed birds equally widely separated.

Measurements of juveniles (caught from fledging up to late August, not shown in fig. 7) showed an enormous range in size and weight, indicating very variable rates of growth. One caught just after fledging had a wing of 247mm; while four caught in August had wings averaging 272mm (263-283mm), and bills averaging 41mm (36-46mm). Clearly, recently fledged Choughs are far from fully grown, and bill length seems to develop more slowly than wing length. Weights of these juveniles were very variable, and appeared to reflect condition of health rather than size. Seven had weights of 237-360g, and one found freshly dead weighed 220g. The two lightest of the live young weighed respectively 237g and 245g: both were in poor condition, yet both survived to the next year, one being the bird established at Llangrannog.

The unsexed first-winter Choughs shown in fig. 7 seem to split into two size groups, the larger of the two being in the adult female range. This suggests a sexual size difference in first-winter Choughs that are not fully grown. On the assumption that, on average, 50% of the birds should be male, it would seem that the larger ones are first-year males (equal to adult female in size), growing to adult male size in the following years, and that the smaller ones are first-year females.

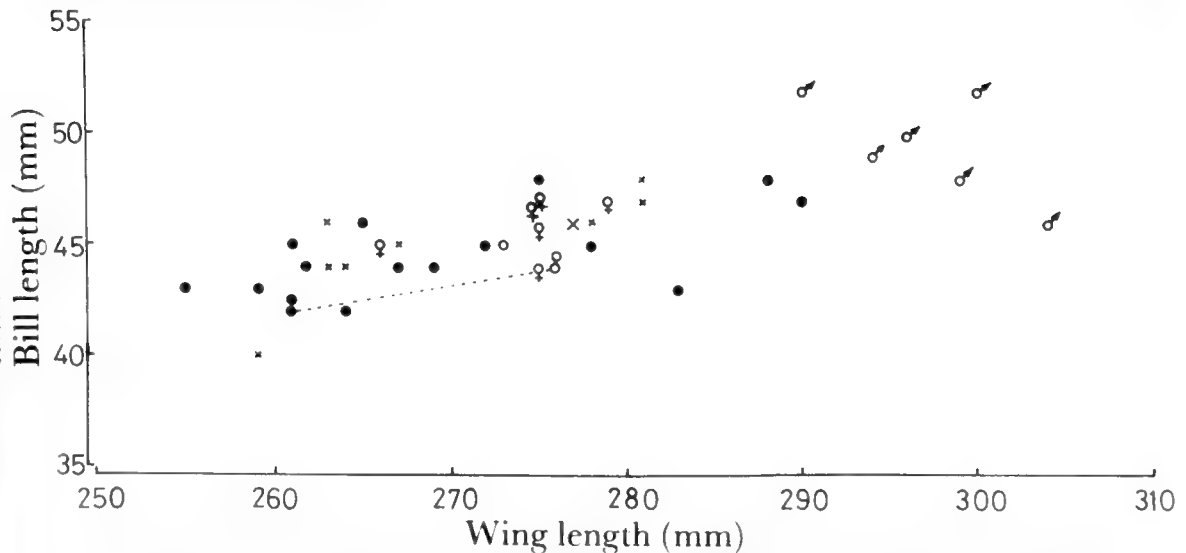


Fig. 7. Wing and bill lengths of Choughs *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax* on Bardsey, Gwynedd.

o = unsexed adult; ● = unaged; x = first-autumn

The unaged individuals show a similarly large size range, although 85% fall into the first-year range, but with no clear split into two size groups. Accepting that adults appear to be very sedentary, and given the known dispersive pattern of these unaged birds, combined with their biometrics, it seems very probable that most are first-years dispersing from the mainland. The few larger individuals may be older non-breeders of adult size. In support of this theory, an unaged Chough at the lower end of the size range, and thus theoretically a first-year female, was retrapped two years later as an adult, in the middle of the female size range.

Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to Mrs J. Stroud, P. Thomson and D. Owen for their comments on their own studies of Choughs in other areas. Most of the regional recorders were extremely helpful in their replies to my requests for information, as were the BTO staff. The British Museum (Natural History) kindly allowed my examination of the skin collection. The Calf of Man Bird Observatory kindly allowed use of their biometric data for this analysis. On Bardsey, many of the visitors, as well as Mrs J. Strick and assistant wardens G. Tucker, C. Rowley, M. Peacock and D. Suddaby, contributed greatly to this study by their detailed observations. Special thanks are due to Ian Bullock, who has encouraged the work and its publication from the start and provided valuable criticism and comment on the study and on an earlier draft.

Summary

Data are interpreted from a colour-ringing study of Choughs *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax* during 1978-83 on Bardsey, Gwynedd, and these are combined and compared with analyses of national ringing recoveries, county records, and reference to other literature. Breeding Choughs are sedentary, with great nest-site and pair fidelity. First-years can show much more mobility, dispersing up to 70km within the breeding range and 140km outside it; extreme distances wandered by unaged individuals are up to 360 km. A first-year mortality rate of 75% is suggested, although this figure is shown to vary greatly annually. Adult longevity was in one case 17 years. First breeding is generally in the fourth year, but instances of breeding in the second and third years are known away from Bardsey. Notes on flocking and roosting behaviour are made. Biometric data show clear size differences between the sexes and between first-year and older Choughs.

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Seventy-five years ago...

'RECOVERY OF A MARKED SWALLOW. On April 12th, 1910, the first Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) was seen at 4 p.m. passing the house at Huntbourne, High Halden, Kent, which lies in the line of a small migration-route; at 6 p.m. a small flight of Swallows passed over to the north, and from it four birds separated, and after flying round the house and settling on the chimney-pots, finally went to roost in a shed where two pairs bred last year. Two days afterwards I caught a Swallow at roost in this shed, almost certainly one of those that arrived on the 12th, and found it was one which my sister had caught and ringed as an adult bird on May 8th, 1909, the bird having come down one of the chimneys into one of the rooms. I may note that there was no mark or injury of any kind on the leg which bore the ring. CLAUD B. TICEHURST.' (*Brit. Birds* 3: 399, May 1910)

Mystery photographs

101 We have used this ploy before: showing you a nondescript female duck as a 'Mystery photograph' (plate 81), and then, the following month, revealing it in company with unmistakable males (plate 96). If nothing else, it saves having to read right through this text in order to discover the correct identity. Here, then, is last month's female duck, now flanked by no less than three readily identifiable Baikal Teals *Anas formosa*.



The more-or-less-horizontal back, pointed tail, and feeding action should all have led to the initial diagnosis of a dabbling duck. The lack of clear plumage markings indicates either a female, or perhaps an eclipse male or juvenile. One would need more detail to separate these in the case of dabbling ducks. Now, the presence of this bird with full-plumage males leaves little doubt that it is an adult female.

There are no clues as to the size in the photograph, which was taken in April in the USSR by Yuri Shibnev, though it is rare indeed when this is so in the field. In this case, however, size is immaterial, because the most obvious among a number of admittedly not very conspicuous field characters is shared by only two dabbling ducks. The white spot at the base of the upper mandible is found only on the Blue-winged Teal *A. discors* and the Baikal Teal. Garganey *A. querquedula* shows something like the same feature, but its whitish spot is virtually always prolonged backwards into a pale line running under the eye. Given that all three species are small, it is worth pointing out that the other small dabbling duck, the Teal *A. crecca*, usually lacks any kind of well-defined loreal spot.

The rest of the head markings may look smudgy and indistinct, but this in itself is a further guide to the correct identification as Baikal Teal. The dark crown is barely separated from the eye-stripe, while there is a dark blotch below the eye, on the ear-coverts. (This is sometimes resolved into a dark vertical line, and sometimes continues as a dark line or 'bridle' under the throat.) Blue-winged Teal also has a dark cap, but with a clear whitish supercilium between it and the dark eye-stripe, while the ear-coverts are

96. Baikal Teals *Anas formosa*, USSR, April 1974 (Y. Shibnev)



pale brown, uniform with the remainder of the head. Garganey shows a pair of pale stripes, above and below the darker eyestripe, while Teal has the most even colouring of them all, with little distinction between the crown and the ear-coverts, and the barest indication of a dark eye-stripe, though both crown and eye-stripe are a little darker on the American race *A. c. carolinensis*.

The mottling on the flanks and back give little aid to identification, being quite variable on most dabbling ducks. In this photograph, however, rather elongated scapulars can be seen, in faint but distinct echoing of the prominent ones of the male. This feature does not seem to be shared by any of the other three small ducks.

Further details on identifying the Baikal Teal, including those in flight, can be found in D. I. M. Wallace's description of the first British occurrence (*Brit. Birds* 74: 321-326).

M. A. OGILVIE



97. Mystery photograph 102. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes

One Great Crested Grebe apparently importuning food from another in winter At 16.05 GMT on 17th January 1982, while walking alongside the River Thames about 800 m downstream from Henley-on-Thames, Middlesex, I saw two Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus*. One (bird A) surfaced with a fish 10-12 cm long which it was having some difficulty in swallowing. The other (bird B), about 10 m from A, immediately swam towards it; when about 1½ m from A, B dived, surfaced almost immediately right under the breast of A, and



started pecking at *A*'s breast and neck. *A*, still trying to swallow its fish, made a rapid get-away, but was quickly pursued by *B*; when the latter was within 1½ m, it again dived, surfaced under *A* and pecked at *A*'s breast and neck. Once more, *A* swam rapidly away; *B* followed, repeating the same performance. By this time (after about four minutes), *A* had managed to swallow its prey; although it had made three quick escapes, it had not appeared too perturbed by the repeated submarine attacks. Once the fish was swallowed, the attacking grebe lost interest and resumed normal fishing.

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This appears to be an example of 'infantile' behaviour by grebe *B*, probably aged less than one year old. Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented that, at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, he recorded an adult female Great Crested Grebe that associated with one of her offspring well into January. Ebs

Grey Heron diving from air for fish At 08.00 GMT on 2nd May 1981, at Walcot Pool, Shropshire, J. C. Smallwood and I observed a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* dive into the middle of the lake from a height of about 1 m and emerge with a fish about 15 cm long in its bill. It rose from the surface with some effort and flew to the bank, where it swallowed its prey. We estimated the depth of water where it dived at 1.5-2 m. F. A. Lowe (1954, *The Heron*) stated that the species is exceptionally recorded swimming and diving, presumably from the surface.

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Aerial plunging is not mentioned for this species by Hancock & Kushlan (1984, *The Herons Handbook*), but R. V. A. Marshall (*Brit. Birds* 54: 202) described having 'quite often seen [Grey Herons] fishing from the air whilst circling over the water [of Abberton Reservoir, Essex], mostly in early summer'. Ebs

Interaction between Peregrine and injured feral Rock Dove On 20th March 1982, at Chittering Wharf, Avon, I saw a juvenile Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* attack a party of five feral Rock Doves *Columba livia*. One fell injured into the estuary mud about 1 m from a shingle spit. For about half an hour, the Peregrine endeavoured to reach the stranded dove, but it would not attempt to walk or hop across the mud; it made many short, circular, hovering flights and long glides against the moderate wind towards the dove, but failed to grasp it. On each attack, the dove flapped its wings. After about half an hour, the falcon flew off. During its absence, the incoming tide reached the dove, which managed to struggle on to the edge of the spit. The Peregrine soon reappeared and flew over the spit several times, but completely ignored its victim and finally came to rest about 25 m from it on the other side of the spit. I remained for another half hour, during which time no further interaction occurred.

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Avocet resting on sea At 08.00 GMT on 6th March 1982, in fine and bright weather with a moderate offshore wind, at Reculver, Kent, I saw a white bird sitting on the sea some distance ahead. At first I took it to be a gull

Larus, but it soon became obvious that it was an Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*. For as long as the next 1½ hours, it sat on the sea, sometimes actively swimming and at other times resting with its bill under its wing, while it drifted east on the tide. At about 08.20 hours, it took off, but flew only about 100 m to join a group of 30 Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* also sitting on the sea about 200 m from shore. A number of gulls appeared 'interested' in the Avocet, and at one stage it was joined by a Herring Gull *L. argentatus*. The wader was still on the sea when it was lost to sight at 09.30 hours. I have seen Avocets readily swimming while feeding, but was not aware that they would rest on the sea for periods of 1½ hours and more. CHRIS HINDLE

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This behaviour is not particularly unusual—see, for instance, the observation made by David Newman and Vic Tucker (1984, *Where to Watch Birds in Devon and Cornwall*, page 43) that 'Avocets . . . at high tide may float buoyantly in a group among Shelducks [*Tadorna tadorna*], easily overlooked because of their similar colours'—but, outside areas where Avocets are common, is unexpected, and not well recorded in the literature. EDS

Tree-perching by waders in Malaysia I was interested by the note by R. A. Hume on Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* standing on overhead wires and in the tops of trees in the Gambia (*Brit. Birds* 75: 232). In the mangroves bordering part of the west coast of Selangor, Malaysia, this is the normal behaviour of several waders. The eastern races of the Whimbrel *N. p. variegatus*, the Curlew *N. arquata orientalis* and the Redshank *Tringa totanus eurhinus* are fairly common passage migrants and winter visitors to the extensive mudflats off Port Swettenham; at high water, when the flats are completely covered, they take to the mangrove trees, together with assorted egrets and herons (Ardeidae), and wait for the tide to ebb. At times, several hundred birds are involved, making a remarkable sight. R. G. H. CANT

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Identification of large terns From 6th to 23rd August 1983, during a study of seabirds off Cap Rhir, Morocco, sponsored by the University of London, we observed a minimum of 56 yellow-billed and orange-billed terns *Sterna*. Following recent letters (*Brit. Birds* 77: 371-377), we hope that this summary of our notes will be of interest. Although we are still unsure of the identification of many of these terns, they were readily assigned to two types (see fig. 1).

TYPE A (at least seven seen) We identified these as Royal Terns *S. maxima*. All were very large, heavily built terns, larger than Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, and in structure resembled small Gannets *Sula bassana*. Wings: broader and less angular than accompanying Sandwich Terns *S. sandwicensis*, greyish-white upperside except for dark grey outer primaries forming a darkish wedge. Underparts and underwing white, except for dark areas on underside of outer five or six primaries fading to pale trailing edge at tip. Forehead and front of crown white; back of crown, nape, and patch behind eye black. Bill large, dagger-like, orange without a dark tip. Only the underwing pattern was incorrect for Royal Tern, and was closer to that of Caspian Tern *S. caspia*.

TYPE B (about 49 seen) Detailed notes were made only of the last few, when we realised that they differed from literature descriptions of Lesser Crested Tern *S. bengalensis*. On average, they appeared to be up to 4 cm longer than nearby Sandwich Terns and proportionately bulkier. Tail similar to Sandwich, but wings narrower, longer and more angular. On adults,

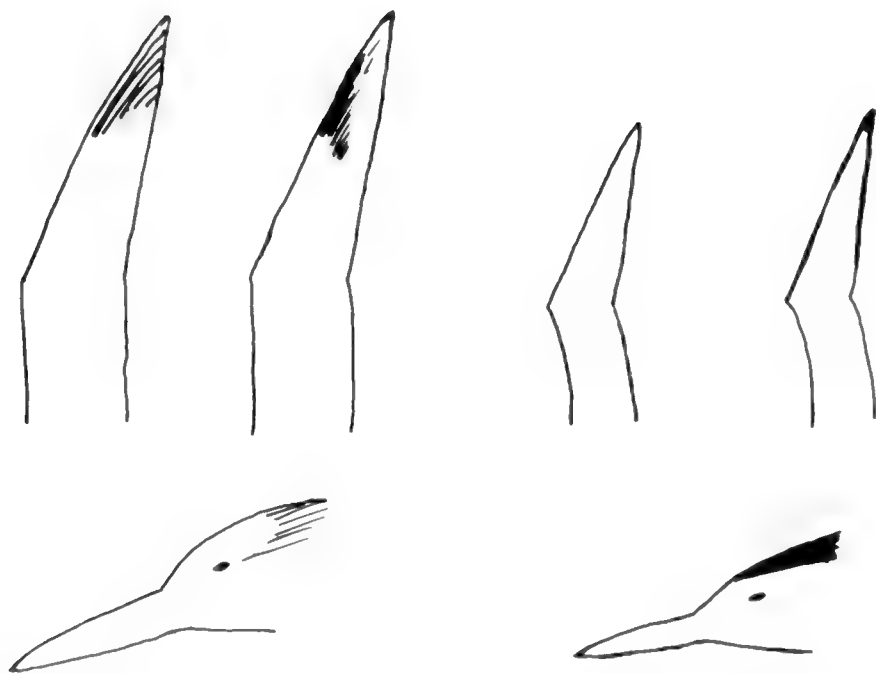


Fig. 1. Upperwing, underwing and head patterns of terns *Sterna* in Morocco in August 1983: left, type A; right, type B (see text)

the upperparts and upperwings were pale grey (but darker than Sandwich); most had unmarked whitish primaries, except for one with about the 4th outermost primary and tip of 5th blackish on upperside. Underwing white, with dark trailing edge to primaries. This type had less white on the head than type A, with a white forehead and black crown. Bill deep yellow, longer and stouter than Sandwich Tern. A few presumed juveniles had extensive areas of black on upperwing-coverts and tips of upperwings, but we did not make detailed notes on these. Type B could be distinguished by its call, which was slightly deeper than that of Sandwich Tern.

Both Royal and Lesser Crested Terns are stated to occur off Morocco. There are, however, a number of discrepancies between type B and usual descriptions of Lesser Crested. The following differences from Harrison (1983, *Seabirds: an identification guide*) are noteworthy. Type B terns were larger than Sandwich Tern, yet Lesser Crested should be smaller; type B (in August) had a white forehead (see fig. 1), but Lesser Crested has a black cap extending forward to the bill in breeding plumage, and a white forehead and crown in non-breeding; type B had a long, deep yellow bill, but that of Lesser Crested is orange and lacks a noticeable droop.

It seems unlikely that over 40 terns would all be in the same transitional stage of moult or wear in head plumage. While we cannot be sure that some distant type-B terns differed from Lesser Crested, those seen well showed the above distinctions, but did not appear confusable with Royal Tern. One possibility not discussed in recent letters (77: 371-377) concerning terns in North Africa is Crested Tern *S. bergii*. If the identity and status of the 'Lesser Crested Terns' in Libya is open to dispute, the next nearest area of occurrence is the Red Sea area, which happens also to be the closest part of the Crested Tern's range to the Mediterranean: colonisation or dispersal from the east seems as plausible in this case as vagrancy from the west.

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Steve Madge has commented: 'These observations are useful support to the fact that some populations of Lesser Crested might be larger than we thought, thus also supporting Mike Smart's letter (77: 371-372). Type A must be Royal; I noticed the slightly darker shade on underside of primaries on some birds in Morocco on a September visit. Type B must really be Lesser Crested, surely not Crested which for a start is very dark grey on mantle and wing-coverts (between Common *Larus canus* and Lesser Black-backed Gull of race *L. fuscus graellsii*) (this is Red Sea race *velox*). Although Indian Ocean forms of Crested, *S. b. bergii* and *S. b. thalassinus*, would be much paler and as pale as Lesser Crested, I cannot see their being regular in the northwest African Atlantic like this. Also, the bill of Crested is strongly arched and very greeny-yellow and stout, although said to be duller on juveniles.' Eds

Leg-length of Black and White-winged Black Terns When watching a juvenile White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, at Denver Sluice, Norfolk, on 9th September 1984, there was one identification feature that was immediately obvious when the bird was perched, but which I have not seen mentioned in the literature. White-winged Black Tern has noticeably longer legs than those of Black Tern *C. niger*.

The Denver Sluice White-winged Black Tern was perched on stout fencing projecting into the river, conveniently alongside a single Black Tern and a few Common Terns *Sterna hirundo*, allowing for some superb comparisons to be made. I watched it at a range of about 30 m for 30 minutes, using a 25× scope in good light.

Seen face-on, I first noted the lack of 'shoulder' smudges and the distinctly shorter bill of the White-winged Black. After these, the longer legs seemed the most obvious feature, the White-winged Black standing taller than the adjacent Black Tern, and the Common Terns too.

On Black Tern, the knee is just visible, with little or no thigh showing, therefore appearing to be at the top of the leg. On White-winged Black, a fair amount of thigh shows above the knee, so that the knee appears to be three-quarters of the way up the leg. These last points could prove a useful additional feature, even when no direct comparisons of length can be made.

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This feature has indeed not been mentioned in any of the most-used field guides and reference books. The measurements given in *The Handbook* do, however, confirm the longer leg-length of White-winged Black Tern (19-22 mm) compared with Black Tern (15-17 mm): note that there is no overlap. Eds

Exceptionally tame Woodpigeons Although fairly tame, the Woodpigeons *Columba palumbus* in St James's Park, London, unlike the feral Rock Doves *C. livia*, will not normally alight on a visitor's hand to take food. If they come to trust somebody, however, they will do so. My experience with about half-a-dozen Woodpigeons between mid June and the end of August 1982 showed that they can become astonishingly tame, much more so than the feral Rock Doves. They can be stroked not only on the head, neck and breast, but also on the back and flanks, with the cupped hand actually imprisoning the wings, which, incidentally, they often allowed me to extend. The Woodpigeons not only tolerate these attentions, but also at times react positively to them. For example, a bird for some reason alarmed

and about to fly off could usually be persuaded to remain on my hand by gentle stroking and a quiet tone of voice, much as one reassures a pet cat or dog. This docile behaviour seems quite remarkable for wild birds, and I should be very interested to learn whether it has been noted before in Woodpigeons or other species not reared or bred in captivity.

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Derek Goodwin has commented as follows: 'With wild species of pigeons—Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, Stock Dove *C. oenas* and Speckled Pigeon *C. guinea*—I have only had such positive reactions (permitting a stroking, being calmed by my voice, etc.) as you record from individuals that were hand-reared from an early age. That is, birds that I had taken from the nest when they were at the stage when the feather tips are *just beginning* to burst out from the quills (*not* birds that had been taken from the nest when unable to fly, but fully covered with feathers), and that were reacting socially to me.

'From 1934 (perhaps before) until and including 1939, there were *many* Woodpigeons in St James's Park that would perch upon one's hand, shoulder or head to be fed, or in hope of food, and tended to be much more placid-seeming and "steadier" when so doing than most of the Feral Pigeons *C. livia*, tame as the latter were. I imagine that these very tame Woodpigeons were among the birds killed off as "pests" (or as food) at the start of the War, when the Government announced its intention to exterminate the Woodpigeon.

'When I returned after the War and started working in London, in October 1946, I took particular notice of the pigeons. There were still plenty of Woodpigeons, but they would not come very near to one. I did a lot of watching and feeding of Woodpigeons, and it was not until the summer of 1949 that I again saw one feeding from a human hand. I do not recall having seen one perched *on* a human hand at all since before the War (though for the past 16 years or so I have been very little in the London parks).' Eds

Cuckoos mating on overhead electricity cable Copulation has only rarely been recorded for the Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* (see Wyllie 1981, Chance 1940). In each of Wyllie's three observations, copulation occurred during the afternoon, but Molnár (1944) reported seeing it at 08.00 hours and suggested that it might take place at any time of day. At about 09.00 GMT on 31st May 1982, at Tilm, near East Retford, Nottinghamshire, we heard a loud 'bubbling' from a Cuckoo perched on an overhead electricity cable about 2m from a supporting post and about 8m above the ground. Another Cuckoo (evidently the male) flew from an oak tree some 100m away directly towards the perched bird, which was facing the tree, calling 'cuckoo' several times in flight. As he reached the female, he flew above and around her in a circle of about 5m in diameter, completing one-and-a-half turns (540°) before landing directly on her back. After only 15-20 seconds, both birds flew off together and landed on the top of a low hawthorn hedge 200m away. They remained there for less than one minute, before flying to an adjacent taller hedge, where the female perched, while the male was chased off (or perhaps deliberately distracted) by a small passerine. After an acrobatic flight of about one minute, the male returned to the female, which was then attacked in turn by the passerine; she fluttered down and clung to the side of the hedge. A few seconds later, both Cuckoos flew off together over the other side of the hedge. It is not known whether or not the female laid an egg while the male was being chased, but it is unlikely. About 90 minutes later, a female Cuckoo, quite possibly the same one, was trapped in a mist-net 100m from where copulation had occurred; it had

probably been searching for nests, or flying to one previously located. Each of three females that Wyllie (1981) observed copulating attempted to lay eggs shortly afterwards; why this should occur is not clear, as fertilisation of the egg about to be laid must take place some days earlier.

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Changes in numbers of Swallows' and House Martins' nests in Somerset over 50-year period

On 27th and 28th June 1981, I repeated a count of the nests of Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and House Martins *Delichon urbica* in an area which I originally censused in 1929 (see *Brit. Birds* 23: 248-249): the area lies around South Brewham, east of Bruton, Somerset, and comprises the 4 square miles (10.36 km²) contained in square F7 of the 1-inch Ordnance Survey map (sheet no. 121, 1919 edition). In 1929, there were 52 Swallows' nests and 104 House Martins' nests; in 1981, the totals were 38 and 54, respectively. An incomplete count in 1933 suggested about 55 Swallows' nests, with martins well down on the 1929 total. In 1967 and 1969, however, the area appeared to contain, respectively, only about 25 and 20 Swallows' nests, the latter figure representing a decrease of over 60% in 40 years (on the other hand, House Martin numbers had risen to 108 nests in 1969). The 1981 total of 38 Swallows' nests may thus be regarded as a fair degree of recovery. The figures do little to suggest any link between the fortunes of the two species.

The small village of South Brewham has expanded slightly during the past 50 years, but otherwise the area remains essentially rural, without glaring changes, devoted largely to cattle and containing about 15 farms. It is evident that, for nesting, the Swallows prefer the old type of stone-built, timber-raftered barns and cattle sheds (of which many remain) to the more recent constructions of steel frames with sheet roofs. It will be interesting to see how the Swallow population is affected by the gradual replacement of older farm buildings over the coming century.

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Nest sites of House Martins In August 1978, at Ravenstor, Derbyshire, I noted that a cliff nest of House Martins *Delichon urbica* consisted simply of a mud wall built across a small recess in the rock face. This nest and site provided a parallel with those described by Dr D. A. C. McNeil and Frank Clark at Oakham, Leicestershire (*Brit. Birds* 71: 274-275).

P. W. Murphy's note on House Martins nesting under street lamps in Suffolk (*Brit. Birds* 75: 380) recalled nests which I saw in similar situations at Ioannina, Greece, in 1970. A variation on this was provided by four nests on 'The Swan with Two Nicks' public house at Bollington, near Lymm, Cheshire, in September 1981: these were attached to strip-lights which

were lit each evening and left on until closing time. The lights were set behind a board under the eaves; the nests were built around the strip-light tube, which formed part of the roof of the nest. Young were being fed in the nests at the time. Unlike light bulbs, strip-light tubes do not heat up when in use.

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In June 1982, on Thassos Island, Greece, House Martins nested under all available street lamps in the main town of Thásos. The lamps were of a very similar design to those used in Suffolk, but the maximum number of nests per lamp was only two. Unlike those in Suffolk, the lamps were not switched off until midnight.

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In July 1971, in Espoo, Finland, I saw five or six House Martin nests built under lamps. The lamps were fixed in the roof formed by the base of a wing of a building, standing on pillars about 3 m above ground. Each lamp had its own nest resting on a concentric metal frame slightly below the level of the bulb and only 4-5 cm from it. Nests were built again in the following years until 1974, when the entrance to the lamps was blocked up.

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These further examples show the adaptability of the House Martin in its choice of nest sites. Similar instances notified to us will be filed for reference and possible future summary. Eds

Dippers feeding on fish E. S. da Prato (*Brit. Birds* 76: 315-316) described a Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* killing a brown trout *Salmo trutta*, presumably for food, following a pollution incident which severely reduced the bird's supply of invertebrate prey. She suggested that such incidents may be responsible for Dippers acquiring a reputation as predators of game fish. Few scientific data are available on the prey of Dippers, particularly from the United Kingdom (e.g. Shaw, 1979, *Bird Study* 26: 66-67). A study is, however, in progress in the catchment of the River Wye, mid Wales (see *Bird Study* 32: 33-40). Of 147 faecal pellets from 16 breeding pairs of adults and 20 broods of nestlings, analysed in spring 1983, only 14% and 13% respectively contained fish remains (bones and scales). No single pellet contained more than 5% fish remains by volume. Only two pellets definitely contained salmonid scales, from first-year fish, and other species such as minnows *Phoxinus phoxinus*, bullheads *Cottus gobio* and stone loach *Nemacheilus barbatula* provided many of the remains. It is apparent that, although Dippers will take salmonids under normal conditions, the importance of these is small in relation to invertebrate prey and other fish. Any impact on salmonid stock will be minimal, given high densities of salmonid fry and the extent of Dipper feeding territories. Milner *et al.* (1978, *J. Fish Biol.* 13: 439-451) and Gee *et al.* (1978, *J. Anim. Ecol.* 47: 497-505) estimated mean densities of first-year brown trout *S. salar* to be around 0.25/m² and 1.25/m², respectively, in the lower reaches of tributaries of the River Wye in

summer 1976. Elsewhere, densities of brown trout may be as high as $6/\text{m}^2$ (Le Cren, 1973, Conseil International pour l'Exploration de la Mer, in *Rapports et Procès Verbaux* 164). In spring and summer 1982, 41 Dipper feeding territories in the catchment contained between 1,000 and 10,000 m^2 (median 5,000 m^2) of riffle alone (RSPB, unpublished data). Moreover, the early stages of salmonid fry are characterised by a high-density-dependent mortality (Le Cren 1973) and Dipper predation must be seen in relation to this.

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Anting-like behaviour of Dipper with fish On 5th May 1981, by the River Fruin at Glen Fruin, Dunbartonshire, I watched an adult Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* struggling to catch a small brown trout *Salmo trutta*. It then rubbed its outer wing surfaces and flanks, restricting most rubbing to its wings. On 10th May, at the same site, a Dipper with a mouthful of insect larvae caught a small trout, which it had difficulty in holding. It attempted to preen its upper breast feathers, then placed the fish on a stone in front of it, swallowed the remaining food items in its mouth, and preened its neck and breast feathers; it then picked up the fish and rubbed its upperwing-coverts and, particularly, its carpal joint areas; it replaced the fish on the stone, lifted its left wing and thoroughly preened the undersurfaces, picked up the fish again and rubbed, and then swallowed the fish.

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Blackbird taking rowan berry in flight On a cold morning in November 1984, in Coventry, West Midlands, I watched a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* take a berry from a rowan *Sorbus* in an unusual manner. The berry was at the end of a thin branch (which would probably not have borne the weight of the bird) and was grasped in his bill by the bird as he flew past; the Blackbird flew off, still carrying the berry.

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'Siberian' Lesser Whitethroat wintering in Mid Glamorgan From 23rd November 1982 to 20th January 1983, a Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* showing the characters of the Siberian race *blythi* was present at Kenfig Pool, Mid Glamorgan. During its stay, it was very skulking; it occasionally joined a mixed flock of tits *Parus/Aegithalos* and warblers *Phylloscopus/Sylvia*, but was also seen on its own. Its main characteristics were the rusty-brown chestnut colour on its wings (more in keeping with Whitethroat *S. communis*); dark grey ear-coverts, white underparts, dark legs and stature recalling nominate Lesser Whitethroat *S. c. curruca*; and brownish-grey crown and back. This record draws attention to the need to scrutinise all out-of-season warblers (and winter passerine flocks).

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The only record of Lesser Whitethroat between 15th December and 7th March listed by Robert Hudson (1973, *Early and Late Dates for Summer Migrants*) was one which stayed from November 1968 to 15th February 1969 at Lydd, Kent. EDS

Whitethroat feeding on insects on algae-covered concrete On 6th July 1982, at low tide at Ness Point, Lowestoft, Suffolk, we noticed an adult male Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* feeding outside the sea-wall on cube-shaped moulded concrete blocks about 1.5 m³ partly covered with algae. It was eating small flies which were swarming on the algae. It was able to cling upright, in the manner of a treecreeper *Certhia*, to surfaces of bare, sometimes wet concrete, some of which were no more than 10° from perpendicular. The warbler was not able to move over these upright surfaces without flapping its wings, and most of its feeding was done on the more horizontal areas, where it ran around snapping up flies.

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Spotted Flycatcher feeding bumble bee to nestlings At about 14.00 GMT on 14th June 1981, in my garden at West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, in warm and sunny conditions, I saw a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* fly after and seize a small bumble bee *Bombus pratorum*. It made no attempt to remove the sting (although, of course, the insect could have been a stingless male), but quickly fed the bee to one of its well-grown fledglings in a nearby nest. About one hour later, one of the flycatcher pair secured a bee of the same species and fed it to a nestling. There was no suggestion that either adult or young flycatchers were stung by either of the bees; as no sting was seen to be removed, both insects were probably males. Swifts *Apus apus* are able to distinguish between male and female hive-bees *Apis mellifera* (D. Lack, 1956, *Swifts in a Tower*).

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Dr C. H. Fry has commented as follows: 'Numerous birds eat stinging Hymenoptera (workers) without any evident attempt at distinguishing them from non-stinging drones. Spotted Flycatchers and Verditer Flycatchers *M. thalassina* are known occasionally to eat stinging (worker) honeybees *Apis mellifera* (P. K. Basu, 1957, *Indian Bee J.* 19: 7; N. V. Charlemagne, 1954, *Zool. Zh.* 33: 1420), and many other small passerines similarly prey upon stinging bees (Fry, 1984, *The Bee-eaters*, p. 210).' In his review of predation by birds on social wasps (*Brit. Birds* 67: 221-229), Dr T. R. Birkhead listed only one record concerning Spotted Flycatchers: wasps brought to young in the nest (*Brit. Birds* 8: 114-116). EDS

Bizarre behaviour and death of male House Sparrow On 9th May 1984, from the side of a busy secondary road in east Leicester, I observed the following unusual chain of events. At 09.40 GMT, a disputing group of four House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* flew into a small tree on one side of the road and then up on to a nearby roof before streaming in line across to the other side. The last bird, a female, was struck by a car and fell into the road where, after fluttering a little, she lay still on her side as if dead, though there was no sign of injury or any loss of feathers. Over the next two or three

minutes, further traffic passed but did not run over the bird, and she recovered slightly so that, aided by the slipstream of the passing vehicles, she gradually righted herself until she squatted, still and dazed, in a sitting position with her head raised and sunk into her 'shoulders'. Soon after, a male House Sparrow flew down on to the road, hopped up to the female, mounted her, and copulated while holding her crown feathers in his bill. Before being flushed by an approaching car, he mated with the female twice more, but now only after displaying in front of her, assuming the upright version of the courting posture and bowing briefly. Quickly returning, the male copulated once more, this time after performing the more common squat version of the well-known bowing display. When the next car arrived, however, he remained by the female and both birds were struck and killed.

Although she had not actively solicited in the normal way, the male was undoubtedly stimulated to mount the female because her still posture and passive behaviour was otherwise like that of a receptive bird. His initial behaviour had the characteristics of a rape, but then, when the female showed no hostility (the usual reaction towards importuning males), he switched to more usual pre-copulatory behaviour. Although the prior relationship between the two birds was not known, it seems unlikely that they were mates.

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Bramblings catching falling nuts in flight, and robbing Greenfinch

During the cold weather of the 1981/82 winter, in a Dorset garden, a wire-cage bird feeder tied to a fruit tree attracted up to 22 Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris* and 12 Bramblings *Fringilla montifringilla*. As positions at the feeder were restricted to a maximum of four, pressure to obtain the enclosed peanuts was high. Birds would sit in the tree and wait for a feeding space. Bramblings would swoop from a branch and catch (in mid-air) the occasional dropped nut. Greenfinches frequently mandibulated nuts while perched on the side of the feeder. On one occasion, a Greenfinch held a recently extracted nut between the tips of its mandibles while its concentration was 'fixed' in a particular direction; from 2 m to its side, a perched Brambling flew quickly to it, seized the nut with its bill and flew into a nearby bush. After losing its nut, the Greenfinch appeared surprised, turning its head in quick, short sideways movements.

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Feeding method of a Scarlet Rosefinch On 9th October 1980, on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, I watched an immature Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* at 30-40 m feeding on the unripe seed-heads of what appeared to be a species of sow-thistle *Sonchus*. After making a hole in the side of the seed-head, it inserted its bill and extracted a billful of the contents. It held these in its bill, with the hairy pappuses sticking out at one side, then 'chewed' its bill, using the edges in a guillotine action: the pappuses were thus snipped off before the seeds were swallowed. During three-quarters of an hour, the rosefinch repeated this feeding method three or four times.

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American Redstart in Lincolnshire On the morning of 7th November 1982, RKW and KWW were searching the hawthorns *Crataegus* and willows *Salix* of the plantation at Gibraltar Point Nature Reserve, Lincolnshire. At 09.00 GMT, their attention was drawn to a small, brightly marked 'warbler' behaving in a manner more typical of a flycatcher *Ficedula* as it fed from the outer branches of a group of hawthorns. Since the observers were not familiar with the species, field notes were made and assistance sought. RL was able to suggest, with the aid of field-guide illustrations, that the bird might be of North American origin, and it was agreed that it was almost certainly an American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*. It was quickly relocated in the same area and its identity confirmed. Although it was very active and frequently disappeared from view, often for long periods, it remained in a very restricted area of scrub, young trees and ivy-covered mature trees, both on this first morning and throughout its stay. A photograph was published in the 1982 'Report on rare birds' (*Brit. Birds* 76: plate 224).

The bird's most obvious features in the field were its small size; relatively long tail, often raised and fanned while feeding; pale yellow wing patch and yellow base to the tail; and bronzy shoulder patch below the carpal joint of the closed wing. Its flight was very buoyant, and flycatcher-like sorties made its presence very obvious; at other times, it fed with an action reminiscent of *Sylvia* warblers as it picked and probed its way along inner branches. The call, an often-repeated, slightly drawn-out 'tchip', was distinct from any similar calls known to RL and proved an easy means of locating the redstart in dense cover. Plumage details were noted as follows:

UPPERPARTS Crown and nape mid-grey, extending down onto ear-coverts; upper edge of ear-coverts slightly darker which with darker lores, produced thin eye-stripe through the dark eye, both made more prominent by marked white eye-ring. Mantle, scapulars, back and rump also mid-grey with olive wash; uppertail-coverts darker grey. Wings dark grey, with olive fringes to all feathers except primary coverts and alula; pale yellow patch formed at base of outer secondaries, possibly extending to inner pri-

maries. Tail dark grey, with yellow on all but central feathers extending from base of tail to half-length.

UNDERPARTS Chin and throat white. Belly and flanks off-white, with slight salmon wash on lower belly, and flanks marked with a yellow-bronze patch extending from slightly forward of carpal joint of closed wing to level with tips of primary coverts. Vent area and undertail-coverts white. Underside of tail appeared yellow across its full width to half-length.

BARE PARTS Bill, legs and iris wholly black.

About noon on 8th November, the bird was caught in a mist-net. The following additional details were noted in the hand:

UPPERPARTS Feathers of mantle, back and rump mid-grey, with narrow olive fringes. Scapulars more broadly edged olive, uppertail-coverts finely fringed pale grey. Central pair of tail feathers wholly dark grey/black; adjacent feathers with yellow on the outer web only to half-feather length, outer four feathers yellow on both webs to five-eighths feather length. Wing patch extended across outer seven secondaries onto inner two (9th and 10th) primaries, though restricted to a trace of yellow on outer web only of 9th;

yellow extended to 10 mm beyond tips of greater coverts.

UNDERPARTS Underwing-coverts mostly lemon-yellow, this extending from flank patch to the under primary coverts, which were white.

MEASUREMENTS Wing formula: emarginated 2nd-5th, notched 2nd-4th, wing point 3rd-5th, 2nd = 5th/6th, 1st minute. Wing 63 mm. Tarsus 18 mm. Bill (to skull) 10 mm, (to feathers) 8 mm. Weight 10.0 g on 8th November, 9.0 g on 3rd December.

The American Redstart was last seen on 5th December, having allowed

several thousand observers to watch it at close range. This was the fourth record of the species in Britain and Ireland, narrowly preceded by one on Islay, Strathclyde, on 1st November 1982. The two previous records were from Porthgwarra, Cornwall, on 21st October 1967, and Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 13th-14th October 1968 (*Brit. Birds* 63: 151-153; 66: 36-38).

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Letters

An earlier Snowy Sheathbill I am not sure how well the record is known, but I have just come across something which might please or amuse Laurel Tucker and other admirers of 'That sheathbill' (*Brit. Birds* 75: 591). On page 244 of his *Sketch-Book of British Birds* (1898), R. Bowdler Sharpe wrote: 'The Antarctic Sheathbill (*Chionis alba*). A specimen of this curious species was killed at Carlingford Lighthouse, in Co. Down, in December, 1892 . . . The bird belongs to a purely Antarctic genus, and it must have escaped from confinement, though the condition of its plumage did not indicate that it had been recently kept in captivity.' Perhaps this one had also hitched a ride!

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Richard J. Ussher and Robert Warren (1900, *The Birds of Ireland*) reached a more open verdict. We feel that it is worth quoting their account in full:

'THE YELLOW-BILLED SHEATHBILL. *Chionis alba*, Latham.

'A female of this Antarctic species was observed on a rock near the Carlingford lighthouse, Co. Down, on 2nd December 1892. It seemed to take no notice of the approach of the lightkeeper, Mr. R. Hamilton, who fired at about thirty yards. Then, on taking wing, it performed a circuit and returned to the rock, where it was shot, but was still able to take wing and alighted on the sea, when it was captured. It was said to move on land with a "proud, bold walk", and its flight was compared to that of a Puffin, but was less rapid.

'It proved to be fat, and was in such unimpaired plumage that Mr. E. Williams, who preserved it, considered that it showed no traces whatever of recent confinement. It appeared to be in a state of moult, as some of the old feathers were not yet cast, but these showed no sign of captivity; and the ovary contained some small eggs like pin-heads (*Zool.*, 1893, p. 28, and *Irish Nat.*, 1893, p. 151, with a photograph).

'This specimen was exhibited before the Zoological Society on 28th February 1893, and is in the collection of Mr. R. M. Barrington, who received it in the flesh.

'In the "Dictionary of Birds," p. 823, Professor Newton alludes to the capture, and remarks that the bird thus killed may well have escaped from confinement, while Mr. Howard Saunders in his Manual makes a similar suggestion.

'If that were so, this Sheathbill must have maintained itself at liberty for some time under conditions favourable to its health; however, as Mr. Barrington remarks, the Sheathbill has been met with at great distances from land in the Southern Ocean, and he suggests that there is nothing impossible in its travelling north of the Equator if it could find suitable food on the journey. It certainly seems to be able to rest on the water and swim to some extent.' Eds

Glaucous × Herring Gull hybrids With reference to A. R. Dean's letter on hybrid Glaucous *Larus hyperboreus* × Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* (*Brit. Birds* 77: 165-166), it may be worth pointing out that, although Martin Davies (*Brit. Birds* 71: 80-82) drew attention to only one probable hybrid in the Aberdeen area of Scotland in the mid 1970s, the *North-East Scotland Bird Report* has given details of birds of this type in each issue since 1975: a total of

30 probable hybrids and/or leucistic/albinistic Herring Gulls in the period 1975-82. The largest in any one year was about nine, in 1976, when about 44 different Glaucous Gulls were also reported. In 1977, there were four hybrid/leucistic gulls and about 51 Glaucous. This high incidence of reports of hybrids coincides with a period of intense gull-watching in the area, particularly by Peter Ellis and Rupert Hastings. Since then, the presence of hybrid/leucistic gulls has been taken for granted and, as interest waned, most gull flocks have not been particularly closely scrutinised, with a consequent drop in the number of reports. As well as the above-mentioned records, there are a further three in the files of the local recorder, from 1968, 1972 and 1973.

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Martin Sutherland has commented as follows: 'Reduced scrutiny of large gulls in Kent in the last two winters has similarly resulted in a reduction in reports of "hybrids", whereas Glaucous, requiring less scrutiny to detect, have shown no decrease. The fewer close examinations of large gulls that I carried out in the 1982/83 winter, however, produced a smaller proportion of hybrids to Glaucous Gulls. This may indicate that their numbers fluctuate from winter to winter, as with white-winged gulls. As Alan Dean clearly implied (77: 165-166), hybrid distribution is more complicated than I had previously suggested (76: 83-85).

Alan Dean has further added: 'Dr Knox's implied ratio of about one hybrid to from five to 13 Glaucous compares with that of about one hybrid to 15 Glaucous found in the West Midlands (77: 165-166), and contrasts with the much higher ratio of seven hybrids to three Glaucous in Kent during 1981-82 (76: 83-85). In order to clarify the regional variations, I would appeal to all who *systematically* observe gull flocks to keep a special look-out for Glaucous Gulls and hybrids during 1984-85 and to forward their results (with details of the appearance of hybrids, and any comments on the subspecific identity of herring Gulls wintering locally) to me at: 2 Charingworth Road, Solihull, West Midlands B92 8HT.' EDS

Choughs and Jackdaws In their masterly report on the 1982 survey of the Chough *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* in Britain and Ireland (*Brit. Birds* 76: 377-401), I. D. Bullock, D. R. Drewett and S. P. Mickleburgh stated that (i) '10% of all the known pairs nested in man-made features' and (ii) 'in general the species is extremely tolerant of human presence'. In Ulan Bator, the capital of land-locked Mongolia and some 1,300 km from the sea, the race *brachypus* is a conspicuous city-dweller, nesting in 20th-century buildings where apertures allow; indeed, it occupies a nesting niche held by the Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* in Britain and elsewhere in Europe. The jackdaw in Mongolia is the Daurian Jackdaw *C. dauuricus*, primarily an out-of-town bird and therefore not in direct competition with the Chough. Bullock *et al.* dismissed the Jackdaw as a food competitor, but could it not be a victorious nest-site competitor?

In Ulan Bator, Choughs feed in flocks on the peripheral riparian steppe, turf kept short by continually grazing livestock. The largest flock I saw was of 130, on 11th June 1977, and I estimated 50-100 pairs breeding in and around the city in that year.

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Ian Bullock has commented as follows: 'It is possible that Jackdaws compete successfully with Choughs for nest sites, but unlikely. In most coastal situations Jackdaws nest colonially, in loose cliff soils where there are several cavities or burrows, whereas Choughs nest in isolated cracks and clefts or in the roofs of sea-caverns. In the Aran islands Jackdaws were unknown 20 years ago; today, they occur in roosts of 100-150. Yet, within this time, the Chough population has remained virtually constant on the islands. It may be that, at some inland sites where

Choughs once used ruined buildings. Jackdaw colonies have ousted them. Yet, equally, I can think of several sites in Ireland where there are one or two Chough pairs sharing an old castle or tower with a colony of 10-20 pairs of Jackdaws.' Eds

Size-illusion This letter is in response to P. J. Grant's hypothesis, subsequent correspondence and comment (*Brit. Birds* 76: 327-334; 77: 323-326).

Size-illusion—the anomalous perception of the size of an object—has been known to man since antiquity. Ptolemy, in the second century A.D., not only referred to the Moon (and Sun) illusion, but also proposed, with remarkable clairvoyance, the explanation now generally accepted. Kaufman & Rock (1962) performed a series of carefully controlled experiments in order to eliminate explanations dependent on the angle of tilt of the observer's head, brightness and colour of the Moon, and the size and orientation of terrain near the line of sight. Their results demonstrated that the illusion depended primarily on the presence of terrain within the field of view, more specifically the distance effect of that terrain. The apparent diameter of the Moon viewed near the horizon was found to be about 1.4 times the apparent diameter of the Moon seen at high elevation. In considering other examples of size-illusion, two aspects of the work of Kaufman & Rock might be noted. First is the fact that, by the geometry involved, size and distance judgments are inexorably linked, even though the observer may not be conscious of the link. In the case of the Moon illusion, the brain judges the horizon Moon to be more distant than the zenith Moon and hence, since the angular diameter is the same in both cases (even perigee/apogee variations are significantly less than the illusion effect), the observer perceives, by subconscious brain activity, the Moon to be larger at the horizon than at the zenith. A second aspect illustrated by the 1962 experiments is the absolute necessity of eliminating alternative explanations of any visual perception. Glancing through old copies of publications such as *Scientific American* and *New Scientist* gives warning that there is no simple explanation of visual effects. Specialists in the field of vision—such as biologists, physicists, neurophysiologists, and psychologists—are unlikely to produce accredited advances in the understanding of vision without the aid of analytical clarity and unambiguous experimental evidence.

Against such a background, Grant's hypothesis, evidence and arguments are unconvincing. To begin with, he does not distinguish explicitly between objective and subjective effects. Thus, his statement that 'Illusory relative sizes and perspective angles are created' refers to both the reception of angular size data on the retina (objective) and the interpretation of that data by the visual system (subjective). Also, the statement '... based on images which are actually illusory' is similarly simplistic; the optical image is not illusory, but its interpretation by the observer's brain may well be so. Again, the statement that 'The illusion can be reproduced in photographs ...' is subtly misleading. The illusion produced by the photograph of the brick wall is not in the photograph, as can be shown by placing the latter at the correct viewing distance; the illusion is then undetectable. With near point viewing, the illusion is created within the observer from (i) data in the

photograph and (ii) data already held within the observer's memory. Any hypothesis which ignores the distinction between external stimuli and internal responses is likely to founder in a chicken and egg situation.

Observation shows the brick and plank examples to be valid, both in the three-dimensional and in the two-dimensional (photographic) forms. Photographers who have obtained pictures of typical architectural subjects using a telephoto lens are well aware of the effect, though probably referring to it as a form of distortion. But the relevance of these examples to the ornithological cases illustrated by the wader and gull photographs remains obscure. A similar test with two identical short vertical poles, one a little behind and to one side of the other, erected on a smooth surface, yields no illusion. Joining the tops of the poles with a rule, and thus adding a depth-wise straight line, introduces a size-illusion similar to that produced by the brick wall. The illusion depends on perspective and, to recognise perspective, cues in the image are needed. The depth-wise straight lines of the bricks and plank provide very strong perspective cues: the poles, without the connecting rule, have no such cues. Two waders on mud or two gulls on water are nearer to the pole model than to either the brick or plank models. That the brick example is fallible can be shown by covering the centre three-quarters of the photograph, including the forward-facing surfaces of the brick pillar; the brick illusion depends primarily on the depth-wise mortar lines. Further examples of the action of depth-wise lines creating perspective include the Necker cube (Yellott 1981) and the painting, well known to students of paradox, in which water running along an aqueduct arrives, apparently, at a point above its own source. In both of these cases, the perspective necessary to create the observed paradoxical illusions (not size-illusions) has again to be presented to the viewer by the strong cues associated with depth-wise straight lines.

The kernel of what appears to be the fallacy in Grant's hypothesis is contained in his statement 'In natural landscapes, however, where there are no obvious perspective lines, I believe that an observer may be unaware of the size-illusion which *is* operating . . .' (my italics). By a severely limited choice of observational evidence, namely the brick wall and the plank observations, Grant has confirmed that the presence of strong depth-wise lines can produce a detectable size-illusion. Yet, with no further convincing evidence, he then assumes that an illusion is perceptible when such lines, or equivalent cues, are absent. Verily, the chicken and egg dilemma. Short-range cues such as texture and stereopsis are hardly applicable in the given context; neither is motion parallax. Hence, without perspective cues, the ambiguity between size and distance cannot be reliably resolved. Put the gulls on the brick wall, one at each end, or the waders similarly on the plank, and predictably one might expect to observe a size-illusion; but, with no significant depth cues, why does Grant anticipate the formation of a significant size-illusion?

The card test is demonstrably unreliable, despite Grant's dismissal of earlier criticism (*Brit. Birds* 77: 324-326). Ask any interior designer or fashion-conscious lady about the effects of horizontal stripes. To prove the point, cut out a piece of white paper equal in size to the striped image in

plate 139 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 329), add spots to scale to correspond with those on the spotted card image and then use the paper to cover the striped card image; there is immediately an apparent size reduction in the covered image. Similarly, the psychological effect of black-and-white cards cannot be assumed to be identical especially if, as in plate 139, the exposed areas are not even equal (area effects are referred to again below). That the results from the card test primarily indicate human fallibility is highlighted by the almost throw-away comment concerning the relative success of the golfer. Training and experience, making use of cues other than just the angular size data, can improve the joint judgments of distance and size; but, even then, unreliability can arise if, as in the case of the waders and the gulls, insufficient cues are present in the scene.

As has already been suggested, photographic data have to be interpreted with caution. Taking the wader and gull photographs as a record of angular sizes, and assuming no optical or processing distortions, accurate direct measurements are possible. But whether such measurements have any ornithological value is quite a different matter. Factors such as plumage state, orientation with respect to the observer, and stance can affect the recorded angular size. Size data derived from photographs are unlikely to have the accuracy attainable when a bird in the hand is measured. Considering now the photographs as evidence of size-illusion, the Moon illusion mechanism cannot be invoked since the waders and gulls are part of the terrain, not, as in the Moon case, in space beyond and above the terrain. The Moon illusion does, however, prompt the thought that birds in flight above the horizon might be subject to size illusion effects. Returning to the waders and gulls, unambiguous evidence of size-illusion is nowhere apparent. No strong depth-wise cues are visible in either the wader or gull photographs. A weak cue may be present in some of the wader pictures, viz. the leg separation of an individual bird. The same cue, however, then indicates that the depth separation of two birds is small, too small to produce a size-illusion sufficiently large to be distinguishable from observed size differences resulting from the factors previously mentioned. In the case of the two Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* in plate 126 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 325), a further factor is involved since the left-hand bird is floating higher in the water than the other Herring Gull. As the eye tends to be influenced by area rather than by linear dimensions (illustrated by image size differences with binoculars and telescopes of different magnifying powers), its effect cannot be conveniently overlooked. In short, all of the claimed size-illusion examples can be directly attributed to one or more of the real factors operating, including, even for birds of the same species, that any two birds are not necessarily the same size.

To sum up, there is no reasonable doubt that a size-illusion can be produced if strong depth-wise cues are presented to the retina. In all the examples referred to above—birds and paradoxes—other essential cues are also present, thereby triggering memory data already in the observer's brain. Thus, the brick wall not only presents depth-wise straight lines to the eye, but also the detail enabling the bricks to be recognised as such; the brain then activates the additional data that the observed lines are, in the

actual wall, parallel. That a size-illusion can be created when the depth-wise cues are weak or absent has not been proved by Grant. It is therefore unfortunate that the hypothesis is already being propagated as gospel (*Brit. Birds* 77: 293-315). Bitter experience has shown that it is not easy to eradicate such simplistic science once it has been disseminated. Why not accept the fact that high-accuracy conclusions concerning size cannot be derived from what, by the possible presence of one or more real factors, are necessarily low-precision input data?

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The man who thought of 'jizz' Your omniscient Guest Contributor missed some important points in his timely account of the swinging history of 'jizz' (*Brit. Birds* 77: 204, 379). It was not just 'coined'; its traditional progenitor, T. A. Coward, was a northwestern journalist who first made his mark when the established expert on bird migration of the day, William Eagle Clark, summarised half a century of speculation in his two-volume *Studies in Bird Migration* (1912), pronouncing that birds migrate along fixed trunk-routes against the wind, and Coward simultaneously produced a cheap little popular manual on the subject, 50 years ahead of its time, discussing the implications of developing human experience of aviation for the interpretation of the effect of 'drift' on birds, three years after the first powered human flight.

When, despite universally frigid reviews, the smaller work sold more widely, and a growing army of younger birdwatchers began to confirm what it said, traditional investigations of migration collapsed. The members of the ornithological establishment, who had been away learning to shoot in Flanders, undertook the study of subspecific variation instead, in the way described by your contributor, only to find that the resulting *Practical Handbook of British Birds* was once again upstaged in the 1920s by another cheap little three-volume Coward manual describing the birds in much simpler but more engaging language, with beautiful Thorburn illustrations, from which schoolboys of my generation learnt to identify the birds just by looking at them in the manner subsequently developed by Roger Tory Peterson.

The rest of the time, Coward used to write essays for local newspapers, such as the *Manchester Guardian*, about the more practical and aesthetic aspects of birdwatching, one of which also described how to recognise birds by what he termed, for lack of an established name, their 'jizz'. The current arguments about its use miss the point: while it is often easiest to locate birds by their characteristic posture and behaviour, in order to *prove* their identity more precise characters may be required, representing a second stage of identification, before the third and most difficult stage of persuading other people to believe in what you say you see.

It seems likely that Coward, in addition to many better-publicised personalities, may deserve much credit for the addition of improved field sections to subsequent 'handbooks', and time he received more recognition

for his work in bringing ornithology back to ordinary people and out into the field. It seems doubtful whether anyone has ever written better about birds, and it seems high time for a revival of his simple, clear, and original style.

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The origin of 'jizz' When I first read Coward's account of the origin of jizz (*Bird Haunts and Nature Memories*, 1922), I was curious about its etymology. At the time, I could not find any reference in dictionaries of standard or colloquial English or Irish. It was familiar, however, to friends from Dublin and Kildare, and it was generally used to imply spirit or cockiness. Schoolboys were encouraged to 'show a bit of jizz' and a sergeant-major regularly promised to knock the jizz or jizzom (jissom) out of a squad of recruits. There was no suggestion that it encompassed any idea of 'diagnostic characteristics'. *Collins Dictionary of the English Language* (1979) defines this as a taboo word, and its metonymic use parallels that of the more familiar work spunk.

It seems that we owe this useful term to Coward's misinterpretation of the 'West Coast Irishman's' meaning.

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Surely 'jizz' is a corruption of the old Army term 'general impression and shape', used by patrols, guards, and, particularly, coastal/aerial watchers? It is still in use in the US Army at least, and is written 'G.I.S.'

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Describing bird calls Writing down bird calls in a meaningful form, especially for other people to read and understand, is notoriously difficult. Those guides which attempt it, especially those translated from other languages, leave much to be desired. All too often, a field guide rendition provides little more than an aid to remembering a call already heard and recognised, rather than giving a useful idea of an unknown call. I should like to see either of two methods used in earlier books revived (if modern typesetting can cope). Some American guides use a method which I frequently employ in my own notes: a phonetic rendering with a line above each note to indicate changing rhythm and pitch, for example:

— — — — —
'tup tup tup cheche whew' (Peterson 1934).

Alternatively, changes can be indicated by changing the alignment of the words, as used successfully by Marples & Marples (1934). Calls of terns *Sterna* thus include:

'ke_{aaaarr}', 'Ke_{ar}', 'Peeee-_{er}', 'Karr_{rr}', 'Ke_{ar}i', and so on.

Though not very neat in appearance, such efforts to put bird calls onto paper without the use of a sonagram seem to me to give a much better idea

of the pattern of a song or call than the usual simple jumble of letters, which help only if you already know what it sounds like.

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'What's about?' calls May I draw attention to another aspect of unthinking behaviour by birdwatchers? I refer to the use of the telephone. Particularly at migration times, observatories accessible by phone are frequently inundated with calls often commencing with an abrupt 'What's about?'. When a 'twitchable bird' appears, there are numerous requests for information: 'Is it still there? Where exactly is it?' It may be only one call by each birdwatcher, but it could cause a continuous ringing at an observatory.

The majority of callers are polite and reasonable and, at least where Dungeness Bird Observatory is concerned, the Warden is always prepared to give information when he can. The temper of the mildest mannered is tested, however, when a succession of calls includes a number from those who, without the courtesy of identifying themselves, abruptly demand information, and even become abusive if it is not immediately available; and these calls frequently continue well into the night.

Would callers please remember that the person will be more receptive when such simple courtesies as 'Please' and 'Thank you' are proffered, and when the call is at a reasonable hour.

MARY WALLER

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Announcement

Italian conference The Third Italian Conference of Ornithology will be held in Salice Terme, Pavia, Northern Italy, from 3rd to 6th October 1985, organised jointly by the University of Pavia, Dipartimento di Biologia Animale, by the Centro Italiano Studi Ornitologici, and by Regione Lombardia, Assessorato Foreste, Caccia e Pesca. Suggestions and requests for further information should be directed to the Conference Secretary, Segreteria III Convegno Italiano Ornitologia, Dipartimento Biologia Animale, Piazza Botta 9, 27100 Pavia, Italy.

Request

Shropshire Breeding Bird Atlas Survey Fieldwork in the 870 tetrads in the Shropshire Ornithological Society area has started in spring 1985. Anyone interested in taking part, or visitors to Shropshire able to contribute some records, should write for a copy of the instructions, which can be obtained from Jack Sankey, 11 Mardol Terrace, Smithfield Road, Much Wenlock, Shropshire TF13 6BH.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Cyprus mist-net deaths We have seen another depressing report (*habitat*, February 1985) in which Cypriot ornithologists claim that, excluding aquatic species, about 50-75% of all birds migrating across their island are doomed to die there. Apparently the Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* is considered to be a delicacy and, to catch it, mist-nets have been used in an increasing and indiscriminate manner since 1974, taking the total of all birds killed from five million to 20 million, despite the fact that Cyprus has signed the 1982 Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats which forbids the use of mist-nets for such purpose, although it has not ratified it. The International Council for Bird Preservation is now urging its four million members, travel agents and the governments of other countries to apply a tourist boycott to Cyprus in order to show how strongly they feel about the slaughter. It is difficult to believe that such a boycott will be 100% effective but one thing is certain: that, at the present time, pressure for change must come from outside.

ICBP publications Three important new publications from the International Council for Bird Preservation are available, post free at the prices given below, from ICBP at 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, CB3 0DL. *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands* (£24), by N. J. Collar and S. N. Stuart, is Part 1 of the third edition of the ICBP/IUCN Bird Red Data Book and deals in detail with the status and conservation problems of 177 species. *Status and Conservation of the World's Seabirds* (£26.90), edited by J. P. Croxall, P. G. H. Evans and R. N. Schreiber, is No. 2 in the ICBP Technical Publication series and includes 46 papers by experts from 18 countries, based on presentations made at the XVIII ICBP World Conference. The same Conference provides the basis for No. 3 in the series, a sister volume on *Conservation of Island Birds* (£16.50)—an important contribution in its own right to avian conservation literature, not least because 10% of the world's species are limited to single islands only, and 200 of the 217 species or races of birds known to have become extinct in the last 400 years

were island endemics. Many birds facing extinction today are island forms.

Other publications Three publications concerning widely differing locations are well worth noting. *Blackmoorfoot Reservoir 1974-84*, compiled by Mike Denton and published by the Huddersfield Birdwatchers' Club, updates an earlier report on the reservoir, listing in bird report style details of 179 species seen there. It is obtainable for £1.50, post free, from Mike Denton, 77 Hawthorne Terrace, Crosland Moor, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD4 5RP. *Birds of Chembe: a check-list*, by Phil Gregory, lists details of over 300 species seen at the Chembe Bird Sanctuary, near Kitwe, Zambia. A large part of the 450-ha sanctuary is a seasonally flooded artificially-created lake, but which holds water all year, surrounded by open grassland and miombo woodland. The check-list is available for £1.50, post free, from Phil Gregory, P.O. Box 23484, Kitwe, Zambia. Last, but by no means least, and published with commendable speed, is the report entitled *Biological Expedition to Jameson Land, Greenland, 1984*. This 100-page report (edited by David Cabot) concentrates mainly on the goose studies carried out by the four-man expedition. A count of 1,115 adult Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* included only 50 pairs with broods, the latter represented by 112 goslings or only 9.13% of all geese! Twenty-five other species of bird were recorded and four mammals, including more detailed observations on Musk-oxen *Ovibos moschatus*. This well-produced and detailed report is available for IR£10.00 from the Irish Wildbird Conservancy, Southview, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, Ireland.

Sounds of Cornell The Library of Natural Sounds at Cornell University, upstate New York, is easily the largest of its kind in the world. It houses 50,000 recordings of no less than 5,000 species of bird, the latest major addition being a collection of over 300 species made on 85 ¼-inch tapes by Arnoud B. van den Berg, a Dutchman, in Sulawesi, Java and Malaya, between July and November 1984.

The Library is about to publish a work, the

sophistication of which outclasses anything before. It presents the songs of the 57 species of warbler (New World wood warblers, Parulidae), on disc or cassette, accompanied by a book describing and illustrating the songs. Also due on the market is a cassette of jungle sounds from the Peruvian rain forest, taped and introduced by Theodore Parker III. British ornitho-acousticians are reminded that their depository is the British Library of Wildlife Sounds, National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AS, where the curator Ron Kettle stands with hands out awaiting tapes! (*Contributed by Jeffery Boswall*)

World Records Ever had that feeling of wishing you had never started something? Well, we have . . . after having been inundated by correspondence on world bird-ticking records! We promise to collate these and publish a composite account soon.

All-Ireland Conference It was the turn of the RSPB to host this year's (the 19th) All-Ireland Conference on Bird Conservation, with a welcome return to the Slieve Donard Hotel at Newcastle, Co. Down, from 1st to 3rd March. Bad weather hid the Mountains of Mourne and hindered local birdwatching, except on the Saturday afternoon when, almost miraculously, it stopped raining, but

the content of the talks and papers presented indoors was such that almost everyone was happy to see birds at second-hand anyway. Arthur Mitchell spoke on the Mourne area on the Friday evening; Saturday morning produced three varied but equally interesting presentations—Peter Lack on the Winter Atlas, Kenny Taylor on Buzzards and Ian Taylor on Barn Owls. After the Annual Dinner, there was a good session on Cope-land Bird Observatory from Neville McKee and Sandy McWilliams, before the Guinness and Bushmills marathons began. On Sunday, Gareth Thomas told us about the All Ireland Tern Survey; then David Cabot's talk on Barnacle Geese and the Irish expedition to their Greenland breeding grounds was followed by Michéal O'Briain on Brents and a similar expedition to Canada. Philip Watson rounded things off by telling us about his survey work on the Blackwater. The *BB* Mystery Photographs Competition attracted only 15 entries and four people. Jim Dowdall, Killian Mullarney, Rob Hume and Paul Archer, achieved all the right answers: Jim won the draw for the traditional bottle of champagne.

New Recorder for Suffolk R. B. Warren, 103 Larchcroft Road, Ipswich IP1 6PQ, has taken over from Derek Moore as Recorder for Suffolk.



Recent reports

Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

The dates in this report refer to February unless otherwise stated.

The month began with mild westerlies until 6th, when an anticyclone stationed to

the northeast of Britain was responsible for the second severe spell of weather this winter. There were heavy snowfalls over most of the south of Britain on 8th and temperatures plummeted, remaining well below freezing in the strong easterly winds until 14th; once again most inland waters in the south froze over. The cold easterly airstream persisted until about 20th, followed by widespread fog all day on 21st and 22nd. The last week of the month was unsettled and generally mild as a southwesterly airstream took over.

Wildfowl

Many of the wildfowl which came in with the severe snap in January stayed into February. **Smews** *Mergus albellus* continued to feature prominently: there were about 70 on the Yorkshire coast in January, and many remained widely scattered as far west as Cornwall, the Dyfi Estuary (Dyfed) and Northern Ireland, and north to Orkney and Shetland where the month's total was three redheads and one white nun. **Goosander** *M. merganser* numbers declined rapidly from the exceptional totals of January—160 at Beshthorpe/Girton (Nottinghamshire) on 19th, and 154 at Farmoor Reservoir (Oxfordshire) the next day. Numerous reports of inland **Scaups** *Aythya marila* early in the month included five at Girtford/Blunham (Bedfordshire) on 2nd, and eight in Nottinghamshire, and there were at least 11 **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* in the southeast of England, perhaps indicative of genuine vagrants? A **Ferruginous Duck** *A. nyroca* at Drift Reservoir (Cornwall) moved to St Ives, and a new **Ring-necked Duck** *A. collaris* appeared at Dublin (Co. Dublin) in addition to the now regular Inverness (Highland) and Tophill Low Reservoir (Humberside) individuals. A female **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* at Foremark Reservoir (Derbyshire) and a **Velvet Scoter** *M. fusca* at Colwick (Nottinghamshire) on 9th and 10th were also unusual, but the cold spell brought in disappointingly few new birds. **Ruddy Ducks** *Oxyura jamaicensis* continue to spread, with three individuals in Cumbria. Given the lack of other Nearctic wildfowl, the appearance of a **Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* at Tynningham (Lothian) was surprising.

Lesser White-fronted Geese *Anser erythropus* of dubious provenance appeared at Sudbury (Suffolk) and Holkham (Norfolk), though one at Marshside (Lancashire) was more likely to be wild, given the occurrence of 100 **Bean Geese** *A. fabalis* in the area. A flock of over 40 **Barnacle Geese** *Branta leucopsis* at

Marloes (Dyfed) was outside the normal winter range. And where did the five juvenile blue-phase **Snow Geese** *A. caerulescens* come from which flew into Stewartby Lake (Bedfordshire) on 18th and stayed into March? The **Red-breasted Goose** *B. ruficollis* at Leysdown, Sheppey (Kent) was present until at least 2nd, while one in Lincolnshire was joined by a second (the Sheppey bird?) mid month. Hopefully these delightful geese will continue to grace our Brent Geese *B. bernicla* flocks for many winters to come. **Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus columbianus* numbers at the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire/Norfolk) seem to increase at every count: the February total was 5,100, another record, emphasising the importance of this site which now holds about half the European wintering population!



Other water birds

A number of grebes and divers remained on inland waters from the January cold spell. New arrivals included **Red-throated Divers** *Gavia stellata* at Grafton Water (Cambridgeshire) and Colwick, and **Slavonian Grebes** *Podiceps auritus* at Barrow Gravel Pit (Derbyshire) from 4th, Elstow (Bedfordshire) from 20th to 22nd, and at Hitchin (Hertfordshire) from 24th to 27th on the river by the Market Place, showing little concern at the bustle of market day! Less fortunate was one at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) which was seen to be knocked down in flight and then eaten by a Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* on 16th. An immature **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* also succumbed at this reservoir, found dead on 19th having been present from at least 16th. Completing the obituary section, an ailing **White-billed Diver** *G. adamsii* was brought in to Mousehole Bird Hospital (Cornwall) around 23rd (plate 98).

A number of reports of wandering **Bitterns** *Botaurus stellaris* included three at Tring Reservoirs (Hertfordshire) on 26th,

two at Reading (Berkshire) and one in the unlikely setting of Northwood Woods, Ruislip (Greater London) on 20th. The Devon **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* and North Yorkshire **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* were still present, and there was a report of **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* at Lough Derg (Co. Clare/Galway/Tipperary), presumably the bird seen in November at Ballyvaughan (Co. Clare), 3.5 miles to the west.

Among oceanic birds, the hard weather in January forced a **Leach's Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* to Wilstone Reservoir, Tring, on 19th. February saw a scattering of **Little Auks** *Alle alle* in the Northern Isles and down the east coast of Britain, and a wandering **Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis* inland at Kendal (Cumbria) on 18th.

For real excitement we had to wait until March, when a female **Little Crane** *Porzana parva* (which clearly hadn't read the books on the skulking behaviour of crakes) showed off in a wide ditch in the Cuckmere valley (East Sussex) from about 2nd, in front of hordes of admirers, quite oblivious of the furiously clicking cameras (plates 99-101).

Gulls

Although quite widespread in the south of England, this winter saw a distinct lack of numbers of white-winged gulls, with only four **Glaucous Gulls** *Larus hyperboreus* and three **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoideus* in Shetland,

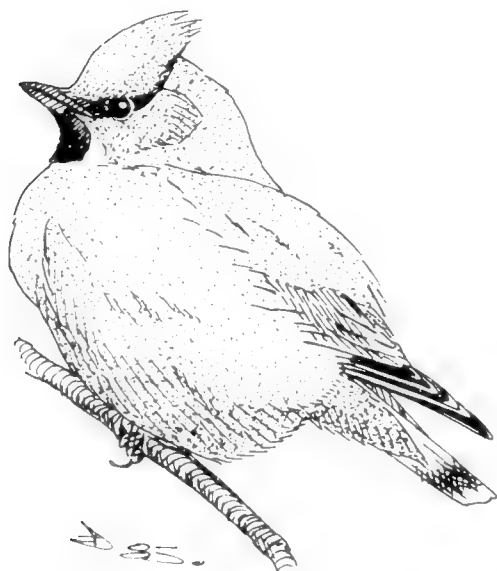
and two of each in Orkney. On 24th, Killybegs (Co. Donegal) held five and eight respectively, plus an Iceland Gull of the Canadian race *L. g. kumlieni* known as Kumlien's Gull. Bridgwater Bay (Somerset) held a nice selection of gulls, including a second-winter **Glaucous**, and, on 17th, two **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* and an adult **Little Gull** *L. minutus*. The roost of about 1,000 Common Gulls *L. canus* and 150 Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* at Siblyback Reservoir (Cornwall) pulled in two adult **Mediterranean Gulls** and one or two adult and one first-year **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* from 7th to 9th. About 20 others of this species were reported in the west, chiefly Cornwall, Wales and Northern Ireland, with a first-year at Lerwick (Shetland) in the third week. An adult **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* graced Ayr harbour (Strathclyde) for about a week from 8th, the Newquay (Cornwall) **Bonaparte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* was seen again on 4th, and the **Laughing Gull** *L. atricilla* continued to reside in Newcastle (Tyne & Wear).

Birds of prey

The magnificent **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* remains a mysterious and elusive winter wanderer to this country, and one seen on several occasions mid month at Fernworthy Reservoir, Dartmoor (Devon) proved no exception. Up to four **Merlins** *F. columbarius*

98. White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*, Cornwall, February 1985 (W. R. Hirst)





could be seen dashing in to roost at Roydon Common (Norfolk), and the same county held a wintering **Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* at Titchwell, with another on the Isle of Sheppey. **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* were notable by their scarcity, with two on Orkney and one on Fetlar (Shetland) as the only birds coming to our notice.

Summer visitors

February is still regarded as the depth of winter by most sane people, but the ever-hopeful birder starts to think of that first migrant, and, for a lucky few, spring arrives early: a pair of **Garganeys** *Anas querquedula* at Arlington Reservoir (East Sussex) mid month, a **Serin** *Serinus serinus* at Portland (Dorset) on 23rd, and a **Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* at Slapton (Devon) at the end of the month. A **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* at Shoreham (East Sussex) on 18th is, perhaps, just as likely to have wintered, and the same goes for **Turtle Doves** *Streptopelia turtur* in Belfast (Co. Down) from mid January, and at Wilstone Reservoir, and a **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus* also in Belfast. Good numbers of **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* and **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* survived the two cold spells, as did a **Yellow-browed Warbler** *P. inornatus* at Amble (Northumberland). For residents of Orkney, a female **Pintail** *A. acuta* on Loch of Stenness on 18th was the first returning migrant, followed by a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus* at Sandwick on 28th, much later than usual.

Despite the cold, **Collared Doves** *Streptopelia decaocto* were sitting on eggs at Kendal before the end of the month.

Passerines

Redwings *Turdus iliacus* were forced into gardens in large numbers in search of food, especially in the London area, though **Fieldfares** *T. pilaris* remained less common, and **Bramblings** *Fringilla montifringilla* were decidedly scarce. Caught up with other thrushes were exciting reports of a male **Black-throated Thrush** *T. ruficollis* at Caterham (Surrey) in mid January, a male **Siberian Thrush** *Zoothera sibirica* near Looe (Cornwall), and a **Dusky Thrush** *T. naumanni* in Oxfordshire on 19th. A **Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* spent several days in a South Wales garden. Most **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* had moved on, though one stayed at Barrow (Cumbria) to 3rd, and a dozen hung around Aberdeen (Grampian). The Belfast **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* was 'still being fed'.

Wells (Norfolk) became a star attraction from 18th when a large flock of **Redpolls** *Carduelis flammea* was found, with birds showing every gradation from the small, dark British 'Lesser Redpoll' *C. f. cabaret* through the larger, paler 'Mealy Redpoll' *C. f. flammea* to at least one, and possibly several, frosty **Arctic Redpolls** *C. hornemanni exilipes*. Just to add further confusion at Wells, a pair of that other taxonomic enigma, the **Parrot Crossbill** *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, returned from 23rd.





99-101. Little Crane *Porzana parva*, East Sussex, March 1985 (left and above, David M. Coltrudge; below Tony Croucher)



Recent rarities decisions

The following three records have been accepted: **Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta* at Saltholme Pools (Cleveland) in August and September 1982, **White-crowned Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga* at Kessingland (Suffolk) in June 1982, and **Marmora's Warbler** *Sylvia sarda* at Midhope Moor (South Yorkshire) from May to July 1982. All involve species new to Britain and Ireland which have now attained Category A status.

Latest news

Even at the end of the first third of April, there were few summer migrants in evidence, even **Chiffchaffs** and **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* being below normal numbers, and **Blackcaps** very scarce. The only rarities were a **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* at Looe and an **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* on the North Norfolk coast, and the **Sociable Plover** *Chettusia gregaria* still present at Dartford Marshes (Kent).

Reviews

A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela. By **Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee and William H. Phelps, Jr.** Princeton University Press, 1978. 624 pages; 40 colour plates; 13 black-and-white plates; 40 line-drawings. Hardback \$91.00; paperback \$27.50.

A Guide to the Birds of Panama. By **Robert S. Ridgely.** Illustrated by **John A. Gwynne, Jr.** Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1981. 404 pages; 32 colour plates; over 50 line-drawings. Hardback \$49.00.

Few of us may have the good fortune to birdwatch in these exciting and exotic countries, but, as much as for the regular visitor, it is vital for the 'once-in-a-lifetime' type of visit that these guides be really effective in the field. These two books from the Princeton University Press do a pretty good job. Just to refresh your geographical memory, Panama is the major part of the isthmus, that narrow land bridge joining the vast bulks of North and South America. Somewhat contrary to expectation, its long axis runs east-west. As might be expected from its tropical location, and from its position between the two land masses, it is, for its size, very rich in birds, with getting on for 900 species. Even this pales by comparison with Venezuela. Next-but-one to the east of Panama (which adjoins Colombia), Venezuela is situated on the northern shoulder of South America. Although much larger than Panama, it boasts around 1,300 species, some 40% of the grand total for South America.

For the intending visitor, *The Birds of Venezuela* opens with a brief geographical introduction and a very bland section on travel, which goes nowhere towards describing the thrills and horrors that seem to be a cardinal feature of transport (from foot, canoe and donkey through to road, rail and air) everywhere in South America. On this score, *The Birds of Panama* fares much better: the introduction contains both climatic and geographic information (and a section on Conservation), but there is also a most valuable 16-page appendix on finding birds in Panama.

But the real test of such guides is in their illustrations, accompanying texts and layout, particularly when it comes to use in the field. Perhaps not too surprising, as they come from the same publisher, the two—Venezuela and Panama—are similar in production, presentation and quality. And both score pretty well. For Venezuela, 900 species are illustrated in colour and a further 195 by line-drawings; for Panama, 650 species in colour and 56 by line-drawings. The colour plates are generally of good quality and well printed, in typical field-guide format, all looking one way and perhaps reminiscent of the wall paintings inside a pharaoh's burial chamber, but functional none-the-less. They are grouped centrally, which happens to be my preferred layout, though some people would lament the consequential separation of illustration from text. Sheer colour may be enough to send you off to the cheap air ticket counter, but beware, because Plate 30 (in *Venezuela*) illustrates 48 tyrant flycatchers (on one page!), some 30 of them clearly needing a great deal more than a casual glance to separate them. Rather disconcertingly, some of the larger birds in both Guides have their illustrations actually in the main text, and I was sorry to see so many of the non-passerines in *Birds of Venezuela* illustrated in black and white—a particular tragedy for some of the very splendid raptors of the region.

Opposite the colour plates appear the names and brief identification data: useful, except for the more crowded plates in *Birds of Venezuela* when you have to hunt out details of the overspill on following pages. The plates are arranged in systematic order, as are the fuller texts. In the *Birds of Venezuela*, these contain further identification details, with unusually ample ecological information on range and habitat, but normally (and sadly) with little clue on status or the likelihood of being seen. In the *Birds of Panama*, the texts, though telegraphic, contain more information and pointers especially helpful to the newcomer, and they do include comments on status as well as on distribution. Both books give brief descriptions of calls and song, not, thank goodness, as sonagrams, but in good human terms, such as 'like a cracked anvil being repeatedly struck with a hammer' (Bearded Bellbird). Neither book uses maps, but both set distribution in the country concerned against general distribution in the Americas.

To sum up, if you are interested in the birds of this region and their ecology (but *not* biology, e.g. nests and eggs); or if you are intending to visit either Panama, or Venezuela, or any neighbouring country, then these are books that you simply must have.

JIM FLEGG

Coastal Waders and Wildfowl in Winter. Edited by P. R. Evans, J. D. Goss-Custard and W. G. Hale for the British Ornithologists' Union. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984. 331 pages. £27.50.

This edited content of a conference, published three years later, contains some interesting review material and some routine contributions to the fast-growing shorebird literature. If there is a central theme, it comes particularly from the long-term studies of Evans and Goss-Custard and their co-workers. Counts are quite inadequate for assessing the importance of particular sites to wader population levels. The behaviour of both prey and predator, and the migratory strategies of birds trying to survive the non-breeding seasons, make things more complicated. Afficionados will know the primary literature. People interested but not thoroughly versed in recent shorebird work will value a perusal and might find longer-term use of the country-by-country review of wader numbers in western Europe and North Africa. It is a shame that the publishers price their bird books for libraries more than for individuals.

COLIN J. BIBBY

The Puffin. By M. P. Harris. Illustrations by Keith Brockie. T. & A. D. Poyser, Calton, 1984. 224 pages; 49 black-and-white plates; 33 line-drawings; over 40 maps and diagrams. £12.60.

The Puffin must, I suppose, be our best-known and best-loved seabird, so it comes as something of a surprise that only in 1984 is a really comprehensive monograph published. Perhaps the Puffin's penchant for choosing remote breeding sites, not only of difficult access but also often in difficult terrain, before it forms really large colonies has something to do with this. Additionally, it is interesting to see that, comprehensive as this book undoubtedly is, Dr Mike Harris gives the Puffin best when it comes to winter. Once it has switched into its pelagic life-style, the Puffin remains an enigma.

It was concern aroused by marked drops in numbers of Puffins at some of its traditional breeding strongholds, such as St Kilda, the Shiantis and Clo Mor, that got Dr Harris deeply immersed in Puffin studies in the early 1970s. This book is a comprehensive account of his findings about Puffin biology and movements during the summer months, with additional information (by Dr Kenneth Taylor) on behaviour, and on Puffins outside Britain and Ireland, both past and present. This distillation of their status all around the North Atlantic, based on documentation by local experts, makes particularly fascinating reading.

As would be hoped for in a monograph of this nature, the documentation is very thorough: there are more than ten pages of close-packed references, for example. There are occasional, and meaningful, diagrams scattered through the text, illustrating the points made, but tabular material has been largely confined to an appendix. Author and publisher are to be congratulated on the presentation of the book, in that it remains extremely readable whilst containing a welter of information. Divided as it is into 15 chapters, it would classify even as a good bedtime read so easily can it be dipped into. There are further delights, too. A Poyser book can be relied on for quite a specific 'feel' when picked up, so elegant is its production: this is no exception, and at £12.60 must be regarded as good value. Last, and quite definitely not least, are the illustrations. There are 24 pages of black-and-white photographs, taken by many

people, but all usefully expanding on the text while being aesthetically pleasing. Capping all are the superb drawings by Keith Brockie, who shares with Mike Harris the happy and enviable position of being both an expert on and an enthusiast for his subject. This shows, and makes *The Puffin* one of the best bird books of recent years. JIM FLEGG

The Macmillan Guide to Britain's Nature Reserves. By Jeremy Hywel-Davies and Valerie Thom. Macmillan, London, 1984. 717 pages, many coloured and black-and-white plates. £30.00.

This compendious volume has a most distinguished backing. The three Editorial Advisers are Robert E. Boote, Bernard Gilchrist, and Dr Franklyn Perring, and its authors Jeremy Hywel-Davies and Valerie Thom, while all have relied heavily on a body of local experts recruited from the county conservation trusts, the Nature Conservancy Council, the RSPB, the Forestry Commission, and many others. It covers some 2,000 sites, mainly nature reserves, belonging to a wide variety of bodies, but also, in those parts of the country where there are few formal nature reserves, other sites such as country parks, walks and trails, and other areas where wildlife may be enjoyed are included. The reserves are divided on a county basis for England, Wales and Scotland; in future editions, it is hoped to cover also Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the more distant offshore islands. Each county has an introduction by local experts and a map showing the location of the reserves mentioned within the counties, each nature reserve account includes the Ordnance Survey map reference, acreage, the manager/owner, a brief description, details of any restrictions on access, availability of leaflets or other information, and best seasons for visiting, and this is followed by a text varying from a few lines up to two pages, giving the important features, including mammals, birds, amphibia, reptiles, insects and plants. I have visited many nature reserves, but only a fraction of those covered in this book; so far as I can tell, the descriptions are accurate and evocative of the main interest of each site. There is a useful index to all living creatures mentioned. There are many photographs in colour and black-and-white of the reserves themselves and their living inhabitants. Publication of this elegant and comprehensive guide has been made possible by the Gulf Oil Corporation in association with the Royal Society for Nature Conservation; our gratitude must go to both these bodies, and those involved in preparing the detailed text, for providing such a magnificent summary of our wealth of reserves. STANLEY CRAMP

In the World of Birds. By Algirdas Knystautas and Arvydas Liutkus. Mokslas, Vilnius, Lithuania, 1984. 280 pages. £35 + £1.50 p&p from Collets, Denington Estate, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN8 2QT.

This is a book the like of which has not previously emerged from the Soviet Union. First published there in 1982 for the 18th Ornithological Congress, it was reprinted in 1984 and exported to the UK (and no doubt elsewhere). The text is in Russian, English and Lithuanian. The two authors are Lithuanian and are among the five photographers whose work, reproduced in colour, is the primary content of this sumptuous volume. The other three photographers include another Lithuanian, a Ukrainian, and Yuri Shibnev from the Soviet Far East.

These men present us with such delights as the Great Knot on its nest, a flock of truly wild Red-breasted Geese on their breeding grounds, and a third and even more romantic bird of the far north, Ross's Gull. How many of us had even heard of Himalayan Rubythroat, Blue-headed Redstart, Gold-fronted Serin and Songar Tit? As names, however, Azure Tit, Gray's Grasshopper Warbler, Radde's Warbler, Thick-billed Warbler and Pale-legged Leaf Warbler are more familiar; but not as life-size colour photographs! The very first double-spread is of a colony of Relict Gull, a species discovered for science only in 1968.

An unusual—and, to the present reviewer, 100% acceptable—feature of the work is a large proportion of photographs of eggs in situ. Many of the clutches are very beautiful.

About 160 species are depicted. They were photographed at locations spread across both the length (11,000 km, 11 time-zones) and breadth (5,000 km) of the largest country on earth, the USSR, and many show habitat as well as the birds themselves.

The final 40-page section includes three- or four-line texts on range, habitat, nest site, breeding dates, food and status, and very clear distribution maps for the 160 species.

JEFFERY BOSWALL

River Birds: bird life from mountain stream to estuary. By Roger Lovegrove and Philip Snow. Columbus Books, London, 1984. 128 pages; 40 colour plates; 60 line-drawings. £10.95.

With so few pages with which to work (126, of which approximately 55 are allowed for the text), I feel that Roger Lovegrove—the RSPB officer for Wales, a knowledgeable and very readable writer—was penalised in his attempt to cover all the various habitats and birds that the contents and index declare are included. Having said that, he has, within the space allowed him, managed, during the journey of a fictitious river (based, the author admits, on the Severn), to include over 130 species of birds. He traces the river from its source among the rocks of a mountainside to its joining with the sea at its estuary. In the course of this journey, the author describes its passage through upland, lowland and urban areas, breaking off to describe nearby waterside habitats, such as gorse scrub and woodland (a clever way of including such 'river birds' as Red Grouse, Stonechat, Yellowhammer, Pied Flycatcher and House Sparrow). The chapters also include many interesting facts and figures about the habitats and their birds; I especially liked the story of the Mute Swan that, after pushing it into the river, tried to mate with a Welsh ewe!

Scattered liberally about the text are many illustrations by up-and-coming bird artist Philip Snow. Sadly, the illustrations are not up to the standard of recent work that I have seen by this artist. The colour illustrations lack the firmness of form that has been achieved in some of his half-tones and vignettes.

Tony Soper has written the foreword.

In general, I felt that this book was not greatly successful as a serious study of a river and its birds, but, as a 'pretty picture book', it will probably be found among many 'birdlovers' Christmas presents. If that allows some of those self-confessed birdlovers responsible for the destruction of riverside habitats in such places as the East Anglian fens to read a copy, perhaps they will realise why their well-manicured river banks lack the Kingfishers and Sand Martins that they say they have not seen for years.

NORMAN ARLOTT

Sporting Birds of the British Isles. By Brian P. Martin. Paintings by Rodger McPhail. David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1984. 256 pages; 16 colour plates; 36 black-and-white plates; 39 line-drawings; three pages flight silhouettes. £15.00.

This book is aimed primarily at the shooting sportsman, and is designed to give him a natural historian's knowledge of his quarry species. There is always a danger that such a book will be merely a repeat of previous work, supported by illustrations; to some extent this is true. *Sporting Birds* is not a book for the ornithologist, but then Brian Martin did not intend it to be: it is for the sportsman who may never see a copy of *BWP*!

The introduction is refreshing for a book of this nature, and the author has attempted to outline each of the 27 'game' species (including wildfowl and waders) and six 'pest' species in the light of relatively recent scientific understanding. Generally, he could have gleaned more accurate and more acceptable information from *BWP*, and that source is not acknowledged. More use could have been made of the National Game Census, comparing population trends from that census with those of the Common Birds Census index, but at least the author made reference to both of those sources of data. Certain statements, however, are not particularly acceptable. For example, Pheasants are certainly not easy to census.

Some species are given much better coverage than others. The Grey Partridge, for example, is covered more thoroughly than is the Pheasant, but this probably reflects our current knowledge. The author has obviously consulted recent Game Conservancy literature because he acknowledges the importance of insects in the diet of grouse chicks, but many of the wildfowl species are not covered adequately enough to give the general reader any new information. There are distribution maps—of varying usefulness—vignettes for each species, and numerous black-and-white drawings, the quality of which also varies.

The colour plates of paintings by Rodger McPhail are, however, excellent, and make the book particularly pleasant. I was left wondering whether the 'pair' of Grey Partridges was not

in fact two males, but then I saw McPhail's Shoveler and Pintail ducks—absolutely breathtaking. On the whole, I can recommend this book to the natural historian or shooting sportsman, and the publishers, David & Charles, are to be congratulated on the quality of the production.

D. A. HILL

The Birds of Rutland and its Reservoirs. By Terry Mitcham. Sycamore Press, Melton Mowbray, 1984. 167 pages; 1 colour and 20 monochrome photographs, many line-drawings.

Publishers and author are probably ready with a despairing sigh for the inevitable comment on this book, so I will oblige right away: at £27.60 for 167 pages, even so well-produced as these, this is so highly priced that few outside Rutland will buy it, and perhaps many devotees of the county will be left wishing that a cheap softback had been produced instead.

The cost may not have been helped by a colour frontispiece, which is simply a pasted-in duplicate of the dust jacket. There are 20 full page monochrome photographs, mainly of interesting habitats, each with a characteristic bird cleverly inset. Scattered throughout are many line-drawings, some given a full page; unfortunately some are poor enough to be a detraction rather than an embellishment.

After brief but interesting introductory matter (I guess that many club-members would like more nostalgia and recent history in their county bird books) comes the systematic list. This is the main purpose of the book, gathering records together for the period 1941-80. It condenses down to about 77 pages of solid text, with three or four birds per page. The treatment is brief—the Robin gets less than four lines—but it is a useful summary (and I approve of the inclusion of Feral Pigeon). The style is a little more discursive than many recent county avifaunas, and much less detailed and analytical, though there is an appendix dealing with wildfowl numbers at Eyebrook Reservoir. While the research has been thorough, the presentation sometimes leaves the reader frustrated. The book is limited to 800 numbered copies.

R. A. HUME

The Growth and Development of Birds. By Raymond J. O'Connor. John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, 1984. 315 pages. £20.00.

Modern evolutionary thinking seeks to view adaptations in terms of compromise between costs and benefits. For breeding birds, Lack (*Ecological Adaptations for Breeding in Birds*, 1968) laid out a cornerstone of research. A great deal of work has been done since then. Theoretical and experimental approaches have advanced understanding which Lack derived mainly from a comparative analysis of field observations. Here, then, is a vacant niche for a book, unlike the case for much current bird publishing.

The present work broadens Lack's canvas, both by modernisation of thought and by drawing in physiological and behavioural strands. Most of the work cited post-dates Lack's study. The bird is followed from nest, through egg and young, to its own maturation and breeding. The range of aspects covered is wide. Predation, mortality from weather, availability of food and physiological constraints variously contribute to the cost-benefit consideration of adaptations. Behaviours, be they song, habitat selection or migration, show a common theme of development within a limited sensitive period of juvenile life. We do not know all the answers, but the reader will be left in no doubt that they should be sought in terms of natural selection. The major strands of current thought in the field are all to be seen in one place for the first time.

The work has the appearance of a text book, and as such is tidily laid out. Each chapter has a brief summary. Algebra, statistics and graphical modelling may alarm some readers, but should not deter. All occur in moderation. In general, they illustrate lines of thought which cannot simply be expressed in words alone. The text is not, in my opinion, as lucid as it might have been. Coverage of the literature is extensive, though little more recent than 1980 is cited.

This book is primarily for the undergraduate and serious ornithologist. It contains much of interest. The keen reader will see how all aspects of breeding and development of birds can be viewed in evolutionary terms. The birder may prefer to spend the money on petrol to watch the price some birds pay for failure to develop successful migration behaviour.

COLIN J. BIBBY

The Wildlife of the Royal Estates. By Robin Page. Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1984. 240 pages; 75 colour plates; 14 black-and-white plates; 49 line-drawings. £14.95.

I hope that the restricted subject matter of this book, fully explained by its title, will not prevent *British Birds* readers examining a copy. The photographs (the majority by Roger Tidman) are not only superb, but also superbly reproduced: they sparkle with life, and the publishers, Hodder & Stoughton, and the Italian printers deserve commendation. Robin Page's text describes two years which he spent visiting the royal estates, from the Duchy of Cornwall and Buckingham Palace garden itself, to Balmoral. It is, however, the photographs to which one returns again and again: they are exquisite. To pick just four, I would choose the tumbling waters of the Linn of Muick (Roger Tidman), harebells in the early morning (Neil Cook), grey dawn on the Tamar (Fiona Silver) and a wonderfully candid shot of the Queen Mother talking to a villager at Sandringham (Tim Graham). If only *all* books were produced to such a high standard . . .

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Soviet Birds. (Cassette) By Lars Svensson. LSKB 1. Svensson, Stockholm, 1984. £7 incl. postage (available only from Lars Svensson, Sturegatan 60, S-11436, Stockholm, Sweden. Sterling cheque acceptable).

This 90-minute tape cassette contains vocalisations from 34 passerine species and subspecies. The recordings were made during a single visit to the Soviet Union in June 1983, and the fact that such a presentable product can be made in such a short time is quite a tribute to the already well-known industry of the recordist. The eight-page leaflet which comes with the cassette gives full details of all the tracks and timings, and is well produced. Lars Svensson admits in the introductory notes that some of the recordings are rather poor, but these are few (and their value to the field ornithologist is undeniable, despite wind- and traffic-noise) and the vast majority of recordings are very good and are a recommendation for the equipment used (which is described in the leaflet). This tape will provide essential homework for anyone planning a trip to USSR, and will probably excite others enough to start to arrange one! Those who have to wait for their Siberian birds to turn up as vagrants in Britain, however, will also find plenty of interest: the names of all but a handful of the species will be well known to the British rarity-enthusiast, and the recordings include calls of such species as Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* ('soft' and 'loud' calls have been captured, possibly explaining some of the confusion over some calls of recent British Richard's), Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Radde's *Phylloscopus schwarzi* and Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus*, and Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides*. The differences between the calls and songs of the nominate race of Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus* and the race *humei* are very well demonstrated, and will strengthen the case of those who recommend a specific split. Equally, the striking difference between the song of western Chiffchaffs *P. collybita* and the eastern subspecies *tristis* is well captured, as is the similarity between the songs of Greenish and Two-barred Greenish Warblers *P. plumbeitarsus* (so much so that the latter is lumped in the leaflet as a subspecies of Greenish). Such 'scientific' interest which the tape provokes is all a bonus anyway. It is worth it alone for the atmosphere and mental images which the sounds create.

P. J. GRANT

PhotoSpot

11. Algerian Nuthatch

On 5th October 1975, the Belgian, Jean-Paul Ledant, discovered a previously undescribed nuthatch *Sitta* in Kabylia in northern Algeria, where he was doing botanical research together with his compatriots P. Jacobs and D. Raes. He made an effort to revisit the forest in the following winter, but found the area inaccessible due to severe weather and much snow. In June 1976, E. Burnier, ignorant of the still-secret discovery eight months earlier, independently found the species and produced a number of



102. Male Algerian Nuthatch *Sitta ledanti*, Algeria, July 1982 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)

103. Female or perhaps immature male Algerian Nuthatch *Sitta ledanti*, Algeria, July 1982 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)



[The inclusion of colour plates 102-105 has been subsidised by Zeiss West Germany.]

sketches (Burnier 1976). A month later, an expedition arrived with Ledant and supervised by Vielliard. This resulted in a first proclamation to the world of the discovery of the Algerian Nuthatch *S. ledanti*, in *Le Monde* of 28th July 1976, and a number of publications in *Alauda* and *Aves* (Ledant 1977, 1978, 1981; Ledant & Jacobs 1977; Vielliard 1976, 1978).

About 70 pairs survive in about 1,400 ha of relict forest atop Djebel Babor (2,004 m), in a region with a rather humid and cool, montane-mediterranean climate. In winter, snow cover up to 4 m deep can be present until May. In summer, it is dry, aggravated by the sirocco (a hot desert wind), or relieved by clouds arriving from the nearby coast.

The Algerian Nuthatch is most common on the summit and to a lesser extent on the northern slope, where the highest diversity of tree species and epiphytic mosses and lichens occurs. Its habitat consists of the endemic Algerian fir *Abies numidica* and the deciduous Portuguese oak *Quercus faginea*, mixed with Atlas cedar *Cedrus atlantica*, Mediterranean Italian maple *Acer obtusatum*, aspen *Populus tremula*, yew *Taxus baccata*, wild service-tree *Sorbus torminalis* and common whitebeam *S. aria*. The nuthatches eat both insects and seeds. Fir and maple are stable food resources, whereas fructification of oak and cedar may vary considerably from year to year, in timing and in quantity. Most nest-holes are found in the soft wood of firs, but also in old cedars or oaks. The eggs usually hatch in the second half of June.

The first researchers reported no relevant sexual or age differences in plumage. Later investigations indicated, however, that juveniles and some adult females may completely or partly lack the black head markings (Gatter & Mattes 1979, Jacobs *et al.* 1978, van den Berg 1982).

104. View from south of forests on top of Djebel Babor, Algeria, July 1982 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)



There are nine nuthatch species closely related to the Algerian Nuthatch, showing similarities in vocalisations, behaviour and appearance, and occurring in coniferous forests of the Northern Hemisphere. Two of these also occur in the Mediterranean area: Krüper's Nuthatch *S. krueperi* in Turkey, and Corsican Nuthatch *S. whiteheadi* on Corsica. It can be theorised that, during the ice-ages, their survival areas were reduced to refugia, which were presumably within their present ranges. When the climate became milder, apparently none of the three succeeded in expanding its range again.

ARNOUD B. VAN DEN BERG



105. Forests of Algerian fir *Abies numidica* and oaks *Quercus* on northern slopes of Djebel Babor, Algeria, haunt of the Algerian Nuthatch *Sitta ledanti*, July 1982 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)

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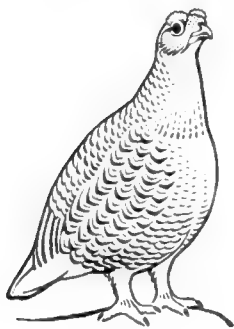
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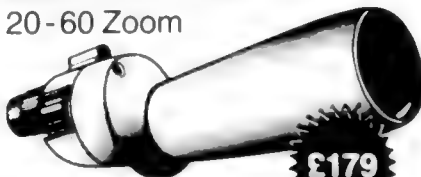
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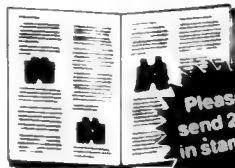
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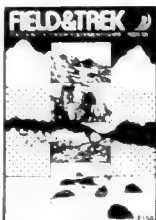
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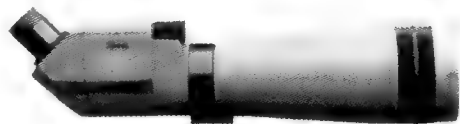
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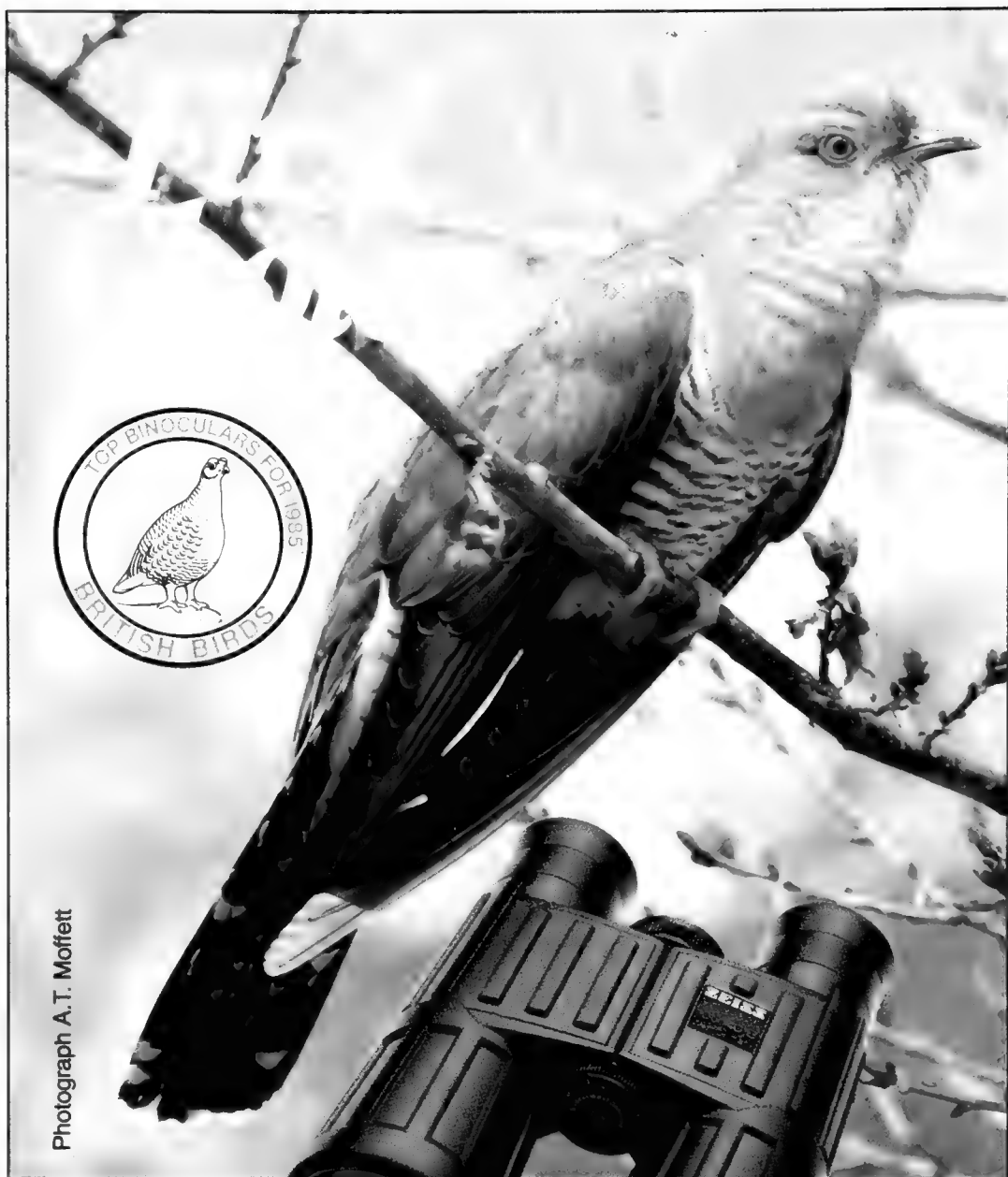
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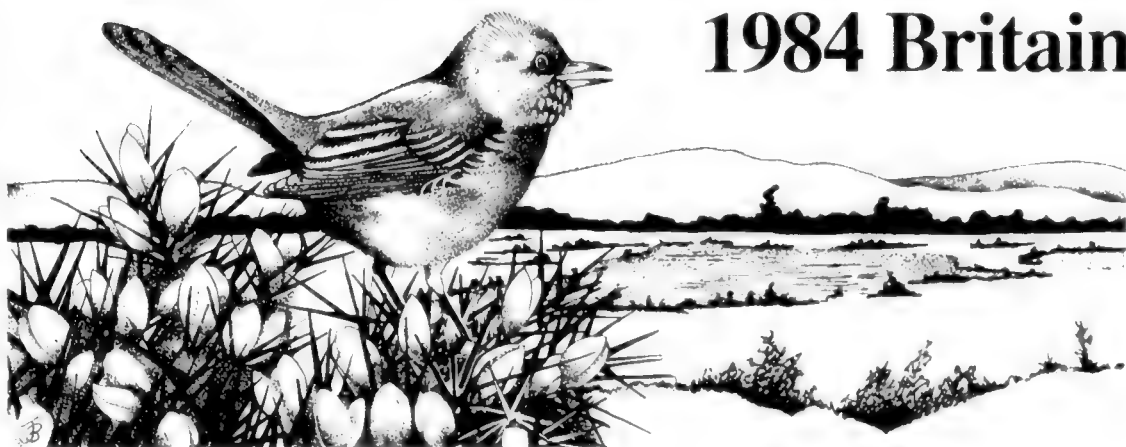
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British Birds

VOLUME 78 NUMBER 6 JUNE 1985

Dartford Warblers in 1984 Britain



Mark Robins and Colin J. Bibby

The Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* is rare in Britain because of the scarcity and fragmentation of its habitat on the southern lowland heaths. The heaths, mainly in Surrey, Hampshire and Dorset, are themselves of great natural history interest. Their conservation is a subject of concern because so much has been altered or destroyed. The Dartford Warbler is one of the key species (Moore 1962) whose status reflects the effectiveness of conservation efforts.

Dartford Warblers, like other small and sedentary insectivorous birds, are subject to heavy losses in severe winters. Population levels are usually below the capacity of the habitat because cold winters normally recur before numbers have fully recovered from the previous one. Recovery at sites distant from the centre of the range is inhibited by the low chances of recolonisation after local extinction of small populations.

Numbers of Dartford Warblers in Britain have been fully assessed in 1960/61 (Boys 1961; Raynsford 1963; Tubbs 1963) and 1974 (Bibby & Tubbs 1975). In view of continuing losses and changes of lowland heath, a further full count was conducted in 1984.

In this paper, we present current information on the status of the Dartford Warbler and of its habitat in southern England. We review changes since the last full survey, with emphasis on the effectiveness of nature-conservation activities in securing the bird's habitat and future here.

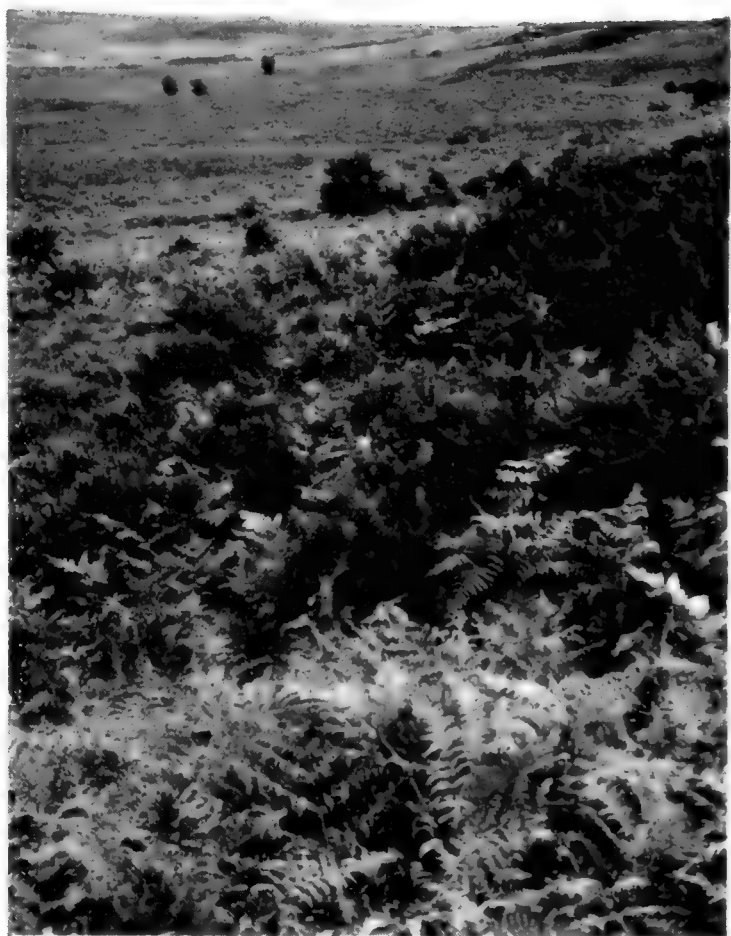


106. The broken cover of gorse *Ulex europaeus* provides sheltered feeding places for Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* in times of snow. Dorset, April 1975 (C. J. Bibby)

Methods

Dartford Warbler localities are well known as a result of previous surveys and the knowledge of local birdwatchers. Known and possible sites, including all heathland in Dorset, Hampshire and Surrey, were counted on two or more visits between April and June. Appropriate prior contact and encouragement ensured that coverage was completed by locals, where available, and by MR elsewhere, especially in Dorset. The totals recorded represent the minimum numbers of breeding males, taken as equivalent to pairs. We do not know to what extent this might underestimate the truth, but an error greater than 10% is unlikely. The methods have been similar in previous full surveys, but more thorough than some figures published for intermediate years.

Vegetation surveys in Dorset and the New Forest (Rippey 1974; Webb & Haskins 1980; Tubbs 1974) provided a background for updating in the field and by reference to aerial photographs. The distribution of dry heath was mapped in Dorset, and the abundance of gorse *Ulex europaeus* on each site estimated (MR). In the New Forest, mature heather *Calluna vulgaris* was



107. Large areas, especially in the New Forest and Surrey, are dominated by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* as a result of excessive burning. Hampshire, November 1974 (C. J. Bibby)

mapped by D. Westerhoff in three classes of gorse abundance (>50%, <50%, and absent).

Numbers in 1984

The 423 territories located were as shown in table 1. Since the 1974 survey, numbers in some places have been reduced by poor winter weather in 1977/78, 1978/79 and 1981/82. Effects of these winters have differed between regions. The 1974 total of about 565 pairs followed a long run of mild winters. This was predicted at the time to be a total unlikely to be exceeded because of expected habitat loss before another such run of favourable winters.

Table 1. Pairs of breeding Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* in Britain

Area	1974	1984
Cornwall	0	6
Devon	<5	2
Dorset	286	127
New Forest	250	203
Rest of Hampshire	4	16
Surrey	1	69
Isle of Wight	6	0
Sussex	15	0
TOTALS	c.565	423

Small and variable populations in Devon, the Isle of Wight and Sussex continue to be susceptible to extinction followed by a gap before recolonisation. Otherwise, there have been several changes since 1974. Cornwall was recolonised in 1980; the first breeding record for 40 years. The Surrey population was eliminated in 1961, and had barely re-established by 1974. It is now 69 pairs, approaching the levels last recorded in the 1930s (Bond 1955). A small coastal population in Hampshire (five pairs) occurs in areas of gorse and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*: a habitat not recorded in the recent past.

Total numbers have fallen in spite of the dramatic increase in Surrey. Dorset and the New Forest continue to be the dominant counties, but their relative positions have changed, with a much larger decline in Dorset. Circumstances in these two areas are explored in relation to the available habitats and changes therein.

The New Forest

The extent of the three vegetation classes mapped in 1984 and the distribution of Dartford Warblers are shown in table 2. Areas with mature heather with gorse occupying more than half the ground have higher Dartford Warbler densities than those with sparser gorse cover. A total of 153 pairs (75% of the population) was on the ground mapped as heather with some gorse, which suggests that the area of 1,654 ha is a good measure of the abundance of extensive Dartford Warbler habitat. Most of the other 50 pairs were also in gorse and heather, but in patches too small to have been mapped. The total area of suitable habitat was probably about 1,700 ha, including allowance for these smaller patches.

Tubbs (1974) estimated that there were 1,558 ha of heather with gorse in 1972/73. The small difference probably lies within the limits of accuracy of

108. Accidental fires can seriously damage lowland heath habitat, and nests of Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata*. Dorset, July 1976 (C. J. Bibby)



Table 2. Abundance of four classes of vegetation in the New Forest and of Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata*: both surveyed in 1984

'Other heath' not surveyed: calculated from estimated total by subtraction

Vegetation category	Area (ha)	Warbler pairs	Density (km ⁻²)
Heather with >50% gorse	769	108	14.2
Heather with <50% gorse	885	45	5.1
Heather with no gorse	1,863	25	1.3
Other heath	9,680	25	c.0.3

the surveys, which are believed to be about 10%. Prime Dartford Warbler habitat has survived at about 1,600-1,700ha, or perhaps slightly increased over the last ten years. There have been changes in its distribution as areas burn and recover, but gains have matched losses. The shift in distribution has in general been to the south and east. The distribution of Dartford Warblers has moved similarly.

Considering the New Forest divided into ten blocks, the numbers of Dartford Warblers on each were correlated with the abundance of mature heath with gorse ($r_g = 0.64$) and more so with areas of greater than 50% gorse cover ($r_g = 0.75$). We did not detect any other factors influencing their distribution and abundance. The heathland in the New Forest is distributed in a virtually contiguous crescent. Adverse effects of fragmentation and isolation would not therefore be expected.

There were 29 pairs nesting in forestry plantations in 1974, but none in 1984. This habitat is suitable for Dartford Warblers only in its early stages, and the plantations are now too old. The population declined from 250 pairs in 1974 to 203 in 1984 (19%). Allowing for the loss of habitat in conifer plantations and no other appreciable change in habitat abundance, the

109. Older gorse *Ulex europaeus* becoming tall and leggy needs to be cut to maintain ideal conditions for Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata*. Dorset, May 1968 (*B. P. Pickess*)



unexplained reduction from 1974 to 1984 was about 8%. We attribute this small loss to intrinsic population fluctuations, largely due to winter severity.

Dorset

The total abundance of heathland in Dorset has now been estimated on four occasions (table 3). Annual loss rates were about 3.5% from 1960 to 1974. The following two studies indicate losses of about 1.0% per annum, continuing to the present. The area of dry heath in 1984 was 2,198 ha, distributed over 99 separate areas. Gorse abundance was estimated on these fragments.



110. Ideal country for Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* has tall heather *Calluna vulgaris* and a scattering of vigorous gorse *Ulex europaeus*. Dorset, April 1968 (B. P. Pickess)

The majority of sites had less than 1% of gorse, which was therefore very difficult to measure. On only 3.5% of the area did gorse exceed 20% cover: a very different situation from the New Forest (table 2). Unlike the New Forest, stock grazing is virtually non-existent in Dorset. The 2,198 ha of dry heath in Dorset held 116 pairs of Dartford Warblers (5.3 pairs km⁻²). The total density on prime habitat in Dorset was thus very similar to that on mature dry heath with less than 50% gorse cover in the New Forest (table 2).

The effects of changes in abundance of habitat can be seen by comparing the 1974 and 1984 distributions of Dartford Warblers (table 4). As in the New Forest, the suitable forestry has now grown too old, and there has been

Table 3. Area of heathland in Dorset

Year	Area (ha)	Source
1960	10,000	Moore (1962)
1974	6,100	Rippey (1974)
1978	5,832	Webb & Haskins (1980)
1984	5,512	This study

little recent planting on heathland. In addition, 28 territories are no longer suitable because of complete loss of heathland; 23 of these were on one site. The remaining reduction of population can be partitioned between that on habitats still mature dry heath in 1984 and those now with other heathland vegetation. The loss on the former (26%) is significantly less than on the latter (82%; $\chi_1^2 = 16.01$; $P<0.001$). This may represent changes of vegetation due to fire, as was evidently the case in some areas. Additionally, a retreat to the most suitable habitats may have occurred at lower population levels. Some sites occupied in 1974 but not 1984 had not changed dramatically. These may be only marginally suitable for Dartford Warblers.



III. Old heather *Calluna vulgaris* in the foreground has died as a result of the 1976 drought. Younger stands are more vigorous. Dorset, May 1977 (*B. P. Pickess*)

The distribution of heaths in Dorset is now such that in Purbeck the sites are still almost contiguous, with nearest neighbours generally within a kilometre. Elsewhere, to the north and east, they are much more fragmented. Population changes for these two areas, excluding the effects of total loss of habitat, are shown in table 5. The outlying population has dropped more severely than that in Purbeck ($\chi_1^2 = 4.67$, $P<0.05$). On the surviving suitable habitat, there were 7.2 pairs km^{-2} in Purbeck and 3.4 pairs km^{-2} on the other heaths ($\chi_1^2 = 15.45$; $P<0.001$). We attribute these

Table 4. Change in numbers of Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* in Dorset in relation to vegetation 1974-84

Vegetation	Pairs of Dartford Warblers		% loss
	1974	1984	
Mature dry heath in 1984	156	116	26
Other heath in 1984	51	9	82
Forestry	43	1	98
Destroyed heathland	28	0	100
Non-heathland sites	4	1	
TOTAL	286	127	57



112. Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, Surrey, March 1972 (F. I. Blackburn)

differences to the effects of fragmentation and isolation of the outlying heaths, since degradation of the habitat alone is insufficient to explain them. A direct example of this comes from a northern site which in 1974 held 31 pairs of Dartford Warblers. In 1984 there were only four pairs, in spite of the survival of 82ha of mature dry heath with ample gorse. The decline of about 15% in numbers on surviving dry heath in Purbeck is similar to that part of the decline in the New Forest which we attribute to population fluctuation.

Discussion

The Dartford Warbler has suffered mixed fortunes in the decade since its last census. It is good to see the recolonisation of Cornwall after a 40-year

Table 5. Distribution of Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* in Purbeck and outlying heaths in Dorset according to suitability of habitat

	1974	1984	% reduction
PURBECK			
Dry heath (1077ha)	92	78	15.2
Other heath	24	7	70.8
TOTAL	116	85	26.7
OUTLYING HEATHS			
Dry heath (1221ha)	64	38	40.6
Other heath	27	2	92.6
TOTAL	91	40	56.0

gap. This population, like those in Sussex and the Isle of Wight, is never likely to become large, and will be subject to high risk of extinction. More important numerically has been the recolonisation of Surrey. The history of this area shows that a population of 40 pairs can be exterminated in a single snow fall, as it was in 1961. Although only about 60km from the New Forest, it took more than ten years to start a recovery, with initial breeding attempts being sporadic, as a result of fires and perhaps chance. The present habitat of about 1,270ha might be suitable for up to 100 pairs, but there are prospects for management to improve these heaths, most of which are in public ownership. At the moment, there are serious problems from fire and encroachment of birch *Betula*, pine *Pinus* and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*.

Of habitat losses in Dorset and the New Forest, the virtual cessation of forestry breeding has had a large effect (76 pairs in 1974, reduced to one in

113. Territories of Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* can be overrun by invading birch *Betula* or pine *Pinus* which may need to be manually controlled. Dorset, May 1977 (*B. P. Pickess*)





114. Fire can be used under control to rejuvenate small patches of vegetation on reserves. Dorset, March 1975 (B. P. Pickess)

1984). The early years of second conifer crops are not likely to be suitable; by this stage, the ground vegetation is more often grass than heather- or gorse-dominated as on newly afforested heaths. Gorse is now more vigorously controlled in plantations than it was. Additionally, the trend away from planting Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* may also be unfavourable for Dartford Warblers. The benefits from forestry in 1974 were therefore only temporary. The sites are now permanently lost.

Tubbs (1974) expressed concern about the future of gorse in the New Forest. Strenuous efforts to reduce the amount of heath burnt each year have succeeded in maintaining the available habitat for Dartford Warblers. The relatively small drop in numbers, after allowing for loss of forest habitat, is attributable to natural population fluctuations. With appropriate weather, there is at the moment no reason why the 1974 population level on the New Forest heaths should not be reached again in the future. The area of most suitable habitat remains a small proportion of the total area of heather (table 2). Of concern is the retreat from the north and west side of the area which contributes to the remoteness from potential sources of colonists of some of the north Dorset heaths. A medium-term cessation and long-term reduction of dry-heath burning in the northern part of the Forest, and maintenance of the position in the south, would be desirable.

Good news is much less the case in Dorset. A 10% loss of heathland in the last ten years included Horton Common, which in 1974 held 5% of all the Dartford Warblers in Britain. The heaths are more dispersed and fragmented in Dorset than in the New Forest. There are now signs that this is having an adverse effect, with reductions in numbers being greater in the outlying sites, simply because of their relative remoteness. If this trend continues, the Dorset stronghold could be substantially reduced in spread so as to be virtually confined to Purbeck. Were this to happen, the Dorset

population would be reduced to under 100 pairs, separated from the New Forest by about 40km. This effect has been enlarged by the fact that the New Forest population has a more southerly and easterly distribution than in 1974, and is thus more separated from that in Dorset.

The inevitability that the heaths in Dorset would come to be nature reserves, Ministry of Defence property, Sites of Special Scientific Interest or destroyed has now virtually come to pass. The concern for the future is less the simple prevention of loss of heathland sites. More pressing is how the Dartford Warbler and other wildlife can be maintained on relatively small areas of land in increasingly hostile surrounds. Recommendations for the management and improvement of sites for Dartford Warblers have been made previously (Bibby 1979). Nature reserves have so far protected sites from alternative prejudicial uses, but have not been of additional benefit to Dartford Warblers. More than half Dorset's population now occurs on four major reserves, but population changes have been similar to those on other surviving sites in Dorset. Two of these reserves were almost completely burnt, in 1974 and 1976 respectively, so their vegetation was young and vigorous in 1984. These have suffered a 9% population reduction, in line with the suggested natural fall in numbers. The other two, free from major fires, have suffered a 35% reduction in Dartford Warbler numbers. There is clearly scope for management of existing vegetation to benefit Dartford Warblers, labour intensive though this is. The Dartford Warbler is scarce even on areas of mature heather because gorse is much more restricted in abundance and distribution in Dorset than in the New Forest. It would thus be possible to improve the habitats by selective encouragement of gorse.

115. Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata*, Dorset, May 1975 (C. J. Bibby)



and so to maintain nuclei of Dartford Warblers less at risk from local extinction. Such action could help to offset the increased vulnerability of the bird brought about by loss and fragmentation of the lowland heaths.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to many people and apologise to any who may have been omitted, especially if they passed on information by way of a co-ordinator. Field data were contributed by: S. Albrecht, A. Amphlett, D. F. Billet, R. Butler, N. J. Cabbie, B. Cave, D. J. Chillcott, D. A. Christie, J. M. Clark, D. M. E. Clarke, M. Combridge, P. Combridge, J. R. Cox, J. H. K. Dagger, P. G. Davis, G. Dutson, G. Evans, M. Evelyn, P. F. Fawkes, E. Flatters, R. Fry, D. Gowland, G. H. Gush, O. Haissell, P. G. Hawkins, T. Heathcote, G. Huggins, K. D. Hughes, J. Irvine, E. L. B. Jenkins, J. M. Jones, P. A. Kirkpatrick, J. Leece, S. C. Madge, P. Maynard, L. Mummery, B. Pickess, A. J. Prater, J. Sage, C. R. Tubbs, J. M. Tubbs, J. M. Walters, J. Walton, D. Westerhoff, and C. R. Wood. Various permissions for access were arranged by: C. M. Claydon, L. C. Drouet, E. Flatters, J. T. Kenward, D. D. T. McCabe, G. Oliver, and J. Sargent.

We are particularly grateful to C. R. Tubbs and J. M. Tubbs for their roles in organising coverage in the New Forest and Surrey, and to J. M. Clark for co-ordination in the Hampshire/Surrey border area. C. R. Tubbs also commented on a draft and generously allowed us to measure and summarise results of vegetation mapping conducted in the New Forest by D. Westerhoff on behalf of the Nature Conservancy Council. N. R. Webb provided access to aerial photographs of Dorset, and the Nature Conservancy Council, Taunton, provided map-measuring facilities.

Summary

A total of 423 territories of Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* was found in Britain in 1984, compared with about 565 in 1974. Surrey now has a strong population after recovery from extinction in 1961, and Cornwall is occupied after a 40-year absence. In the centre of the range, about 10-15% of the population decline is attributed to 1974 having followed a run of milder winters than did 1984. A loss of 75 territories was due to the growth of forestry plantations, temporarily suitable in 1974 but now too old (and permanently unsuitable), and fortunately not replaced by other new plantings. The amount of suitable habitat has remained about the same in the New Forest, but declined by about 10% in Dorset. Further losses in Dorset have been due to degradation of sites, and the effects of fragmentation and isolation. Suitable habitat is more densely occupied in the Purbeck peninsula than in the other more isolated heaths in Dorset. The Dorset and New Forest populations are more separate than they were in 1974. The maintenance or improvement of suitable habitat on protected sites should be a priority for the future?

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Mystery photographs



116. Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* in winter plumage, USA, April 1982 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)

102 This robust-looking wader (plate 97, repeated here as plate 116) has generally stocky proportions, short legs (less than maximum depth of body), and swarthy, boldly scaled upperparts, suggesting a species of *Calidris*. Comparing it mentally with Dunlin *C. alpina*, it is larger bodied, with a proportionately smaller head and shorter, only slightly down-curved bill; it is generally sturdier, but is longer and more attenuated at the rear. It has a flat-backed, horizontal carriage, an apparently short neck, and a full-breasted appearance.

It also has a distinctive pattern to its underparts: a strongly marked throat and a vertically streaked breast, cleanly demarcated from the white belly. Together, these features are indicative of Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos* and, in the field, observation of the typically yellow-ochre legs would complete the diagnosis. This particular individual, photographed by Arnoud B. van den Berg in the USA during April 1982, is still in winter plumage (some scapulars seem to be missing, signalling the onset of the spring moult). It would look rather greyer and colder in tone than the more familiar (in Europe) juveniles and summer adults, both of which have more richly coloured and more sharply defined fringes to the feathers of the mantle, scapulars and tertials and, usually, well-marked white mantle and scapular Vs.

When a Pectoral becomes suspicious, it may adopt an erect, head-up posture (with, abruptly, a surprisingly long neck); it can momentarily recall a female Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* rather than a *Calidris* (and, in fact, shares a rather similar flight pattern, with little wing-bar and two white ovals at the base of the tail), but thought of that species should be soon dispelled as it returns to its normal posture: the imperious stance is short-lived and is not the persistently elevated mien (a function of both posture and leg-length) of the Ruff.

The only real confusion-species is its close relative, the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata*, which is of similar proportions, though, to some

eyes, heavier-looking. Juveniles and winter adults lack extensive markings on the underparts: juveniles usually display a narrowly streaked necklace above a warm, rufous-buff breast, while adults are diffusely marked at the sides of the pale greyish-buff breast. They are thus distinct from almost all Pectoral Sandpipers (a few juvenile Pectorals have markings which are slightly less strong in the centre of the breast). On summer adult Sharp-tailed, the underparts are boldly marked with scallops and chevrons, but, unlike the Pectoral, these markings continue profusely onto the flanks, and do not form a clearly delineated gorget; additionally, the undertail-coverts are extensively streaked. At all ages, the head pattern provides useful clues; the crown of Sharp-tailed is strongly toned with chestnut or rufous (particularly on adults), producing a bright cap which contrasts with the upperparts and is highlighted by a clearly defined, white supercilium, widest behind the eye. The crown of Pectoral, though displaying chestnut, rarely forms such an obviously distinct, bright cap. The supercilium is frequently heavily streaked on adults and is broader in front of the eye than behind; on juveniles, although occasionally like that of the adult, the fore-supercilium is more-frequently diffuse or even forked. On individuals with heavily streaked supercilia (such as the mystery bird), the pale eye-ring is highlighted, and can almost match in prominence that of the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper: this suggested field-character (*Brit. Birds* 75: 128) must, therefore, be used with caution.

Pectoral Sandpiper in worn adult summer plumage has featured previously in this series (*Brit. Birds* 74: 344-345) and another picture of the same individual is shown here (plate 117). Readers are referred to that item and to the paper by D. J. Britton (*Brit. Birds* 73: 333-345) for a fuller discussion of the characters of these two species.

A. R. DEAN

117. Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* in worn adult summer plumage, Mid Glamorgan, August 1980. The moult to winter plumage is under way, as shown by the newly grown winter feathers (two lower scapulars and about six upper scapulars) (*Richard G. Smith*)





118 & 119. Mystery photographs 103. Identify the species. Answer next month

Diary dates

This list covers July 1985 to June 1986

2nd July BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB. Dr Brian Wood on 'Waterfowl conservation and wetland management in Tunisia and Algeria'. Central London. Non-members should write (enclosing SAE) at least two weeks before to Hon. Secretary, R. E. F. Peal, 2 Chestnut Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3AR.

4th-17th July SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10-5 Mon.-Fri., 10-1 Sat. Admission £1.00 (free to SWLA members).

6th July ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST AGM. Natural History Museum, London. Details from OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

2nd-6th September JOINT MEETING OF INTERNATIONAL BIRD CENSUS COMMITTEE AND EUROPEAN ORNITHOLOGICAL ATLAS COMMITTEE. University of Dijon, France. 'The influence of man on forest bird communities.'

Further information from Dr B. Frochot, Laboratoire d'Ecologie, Bâtiment Mirande, Université, 2100 Dijon, France.

14th-18th September THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE FILM-MAKERS' SYMPOSIUM. The University, Claverton Down, Bath, Avon. 'Wildlife and the third age of broadcasting.' Details from the British Kinematograph Sound and Television Society, 110-112 Victoria House, Vernon Place, London WC2B 4DJ.

3rd-6th October THIRD ITALIAN CONFERENCE OF ORNITHOLOGY. Salice Terme, Pavia, Northern Italy. Information from Conference Secretary, Segreteria III Convegno Italiano Ornitologia, Dipartimento Biologia Animale, Piazza Botta 9, 27100 Pavia, Italy.

11th-13th October BTO STATISTICS COURSE. Eaton Hall International, Retford, Nottinghamshire. Contact John Perry at Eaton Hall International; tel.: Retford (0777) 706441.

12th October RSPB LONDON DAY AND AGM. Kensington and Chelsea Town Hall. Details from Mrs Marcella Hume, RSPB, The

Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

26th October JOINT BTO/LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY/LEICESTER POLYTECHNIC ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. Leicester Polytechnic. 'Seabirds.' Details from Ron Hickling, 44 Swithland Lane, Rothley, Leicester; tel.: Leicester (0533) 302845.

1st-3rd November SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM. Marine Hotel, North Berwick. Details from Club Secretary, SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

2nd-10th November RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL MEETING AND SYMPOSIUM ON THE MANAGEMENT OF BIRDS OF PREY. Capitol Plaza Holiday Inn, Sacramento, California. Information from Dr Richard R. Olendorff, US Bureau of Land Management, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, California 95825, USA.

9th November BTO/SURREY BIRD CLUB ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. University of Surrey, Guildford. 'Man and birds.' Details from Mrs Gina Carrington, Applegarth House, The Hildens, Westcott, near Dorking, Surrey; tel.: Dorking (0306) 889095.

15th-17th November IRISH WILDBIRD CONSERVANCY/BTO CONFERENCE. The Grand Hotel, Malahide, Co. Dublin. 'Birds—past, present and future.' Information from Jim Dowdall, 47 Swansnest Court, Kilbarrack, Dublin 5.

23rd-24th November SCOTTISH RINGERS' CONFERENCE. Middleton Hall Conference Centre, near Edinburgh. Details from Jacquie Clark, SOC.

29th November-1st December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. 'BTO in action.' Details from Tim Davis, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR; tel.: Tring (044282) 3461.

13th-15th December NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS. National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. Details

from Brian Byles, Editor, 'Cage and Aviary Birds', Surrey House, 1 Throwley Way, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4QQ.

3rd-5th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Swanwick. Details from the Ringing Office, BTO.

25th and 26th January YOC GARDEN BIRDWATCH. 9.00-10.00 a.m.

26th-29th January THIRD INTERNATIONAL PHEASANT SYMPOSIUM. Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand. Details from Keith Howman, World Pheasant Association, Ashmere, Felix Lane, Shepperton, Middlesex.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

31st January Closing date for 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs'.

14th-16th February BTO POPULATIONS CONFERENCE. Swanwick. 'Waders.' Details from Rob Fuller, BTO.

14th March Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.

18th March-13th May YOC MIGRATION PHONE-IN. Telephone Sandy (0767) 80551. Tuesdays only, 5 p.m.-7.30 p.m. Records from adults welcomed.

22nd March (provisional) BOU AGM. Oxford. Details from BOU, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.

11th-13th April RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. University of York. Details from Mrs Marcella Hume.

12th April BTO ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. Gamston, Retford, Nottinghamshire. Details from Ted Cowley, Lincoln Cottage, Main Street, Clayworth, Retford; tel.: Retford (0777) 817799.

5th May YOC NATIONAL SPONSORED BIRDWATCH.

22nd-29th June 19TH INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS. Ottawa, Canada. Information from Dr Henri Ouellet, Secretary General, XIX Congressus Internationalis Ornithologicus, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0M8.

Sheila D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Seventy-five years ago...

'Mr Gurney reports that during the end of December, 1908, and January, 1909, Mr F. Coburn received from King's Lynn fourteen examples of Brent Geese, which he identified as belonging to the American form *Bernicla brenta nigricans* (Lawrence). All the birds were reported as shot in the Wash—two on January 19th, 1909, and seven more on the 26th.' (*Brit. Birds* 4: 27; June 1910)

PhotoSpot

12. Dupont's Lark

Some species have a very special appeal, for a variety of reasons. The attraction of this one is at least partly its elusive quality. It has a very restricted world range, extending only in a strip through North Africa from Morocco to Egypt (and in Iberia), and, even where it occurs, is often not easy (or even impossible) to find. It is vocal and active in daylight hours only at dawn, though can be heard singing at night. It stands stationary and



120. Adult Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*, Spain, July 1983 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)

well hidden, or runs rather than flies, in its very flat habitat, which does, however, have low vegetation in which the bird soon vanishes (if it ever appears). There must be many observers who have heard Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti* but not seen it. When seen, it has a most distinctive posture, with an upright stance and the curved bill pointing slightly upwards. Then, suddenly, the body becomes horizontal and the bird gallops away on its long legs, rather like a two-legged horse. The eastern race is pale and reddish, but the western race is perhaps even more attractive, with dark brown upperparts, spangled with pearl-like contrasting spots. We have recently featured this species in a paper by A. Aragües



121. Adult Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*, Spain, July 1983 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)

and A. Herranz (*Brit. Birds* 76: 57-62) and there have been other recent publications on it in *Le Gerfaut* (72: 231-235) and *Dutch Birding* (6: 102-105).

JTRS

Points of view

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

14. Help for the Snowy Owls

The report on 'Rare breeding birds in the UK in 1982' (*Brit. Birds* 78: 69-92) mentioned the presence of up to four female Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca* on Fetlar, Shetland, throughout the breeding season, and noted that, in the absence of any males, two individuals laid single unfertilised eggs.

Surely, the time is now right to introduce males from Scandinavia or from zoo collections into the area and, hopefully, re-establish breeding.

If introduction is not carried out, it will not be long before the female Snowy Owls disappear altogether. What a sad loss to British avifauna this would be. Once again, the Snowy Owl would be relegated to the status of rare vagrant.

Other species, such as White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, have been successfully introduced. It can be only a matter of time before they become established breeders. The same should be done for the Snowy Owl.

MIKE TERRY

224 Bluebell Road, Swaythling, Southampton SO2 3LJ

We must point out that the White-tailed Eagles are being reintroduced (not introduced) by conservation bodies, after extermination of the natural population by man's activities, whereas the Snowy Owls are failing to become established as their initial natural colonisation peters out. The cases are, therefore, not strictly comparable. What, however, are readers' opinions on Mike Terry's suggestion? Eds

Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs

Our feature—in this, its 26th year—relies heavily on regular contributors. Although we are delighted to welcome two newcomers. Of the 'established' contributors, Sheila and Brian Bottomley have an entry for the 15th year, Kevin Carlson for the 14th year (with three selected), Dennis Green for the 12th year, and Harold Grenfell for the tenth year, while work by Tony Bond appears for the seventh consecutive year. Our newcomers this year are S. M. D. Alexander and A. R. Hamblin, to whom go our congratulations. The submissions were such that we are able to present a varied selection of bird-photographs, most away from the nest, of birds of such diverse sizes and species as Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* and Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*.

Over the years, Dennis Green has let us see many of his shots of Merlins *Falco columbarius*, and the one we reproduce here (plate 122) is a worthy addition to his fine series of photographs of that species. Harold Grenfell has submitted a number of wader pictures in the past, and this year we have selected two, both showing the same two species, Dunlin *Calidris alpina* and Little Stint *C. minuta*. The latter, surprisingly, appears for the first time in this feature. The first of these two photographs (plate 123) makes a wonderful pattern as a mixed flock of Dunlins with a few Little Stints flies past, all banking in the co-ordinated way characteristic of the smaller waders. The companion picture (plate 124) provides a fine size-comparison

of Little Stint and Dunlin feeding side-by-side, the watery surround to the birds avoiding the compositional problem of an out-of-focus foreground.

A visit to Cyprus provided S. M. D. Alexander with a 'double first': the first selection of his work for this feature, and the first time that a Griffon Vulture has been included (plate 125). The fine underwing detail makes this both an attractive and a useful picture. We are delighted once again to be able to include a characteristic and delightful Bottomley wader (plate 126): on this occasion, the result of a recent expedition to Florida. This particular picture, of a winter-plumaged 'peep', would not have been out of place in the feature 'Mystery photographs', the choice (in Florida) being between Semipalmated *Calidris pusilla* and Western Sandpipers *C. mauri*. The slightly tapering, longish, decurved bill, finely streaked head and nape lacking any capped effect, and slender, elongated body, all indicate Western Sandpiper, though for that species this individual has a comparatively short bill. Hardly surprisingly, this species also features for the first time.

A mystery photograph of a different kind is provided by Mark Hamblin's interesting shot of a preening Rook *Corvus frugilegus* (plate 127), presumably perched by its nest. This bird's identification is not immediately apparent, but the obviously early spring, tree-top location is perhaps the best clue to its identity. The lower photograph on the same page (plate 128) was taken by a second member of the Hamblin family, A. R. Hamblin. This delightful shot of a female Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* near its nest, neatly framed by the branch on which it perches, is a fine entry for this feature, his son Mark's first entry being as recent as last year.

Dr Kevin Carlson's photographs are well known to *British Birds*' readers, and this year we have selected three, all fine examples of his careful, painstaking technique. The Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* (plate 129) is shown to perfection, with fine plumage detail, unobscured by any surrounding foliage, while the cock Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* (plate 130), an interesting melanistic mutant attracted to bait, is well shown in typical woodland habitat.

Tony Bond's photographs this year are both of groups of birds. The first (plate 131) shows Curlews *Numenius arquata*, alert, in a compact group, all the birds within the picture and with enough depth-of-field for all to be in focus. The second (plate 132), an excited group of Common Terns *Sterna hirundo*, attracted to food supplied by the photographer, provides an original and lively picture; again the shot is well framed, with the centre of interest well positioned. Kevin Carlson's third photograph (plate 133) is also of a bird at bait: a Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* in a characteristic pose at a well-chosen site.

We much admired the photograph by Bjørn Huseby (plate 134): one of the most delightful pictures of a Blue Tit that we have seen. It is in flight, is superbly positioned, with every detail of the bird's plumage shown, and is framed by a muted but interesting background. We look forward to seeing more of Huseby's work, represented here for the third time.

We much enjoyed examining the photographs submitted for this feature. Work for next year's selection should be submitted by 31st January 1986.

We also take the opportunity of reminding potential contributors of the need to comply with both the spirit and the letter of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

R. J. CHANDLER, ERIC HOSKING, J. T. R. SHARROCK AND DON SMITH

122. Female Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Clwyd, June 1980 (*Dennis Green*) (Hasselblad 500 C/M, 150 mm Sonnar; Tri-X; f6.3, 1/250)





123. Above, Dunlins *Calidris alpina* and Little Stints *C. minuta*, Dorset, September 1984 (*Harold E. Grenfell*) (Nikon FM2, 300 mm Nikkor; Tri-X; f6.3, 1/1000)

124. Below, juvenile Little Stint *Calidris minuta* and juvenile Dunlin *C. alpina*, Dorset, September 1984 (*Harold E. Grenfell*) (Nikon FM2, 300 mm Nikkor; Tri-X; f6.3, 1/1000)

125. Top right, immature Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, Cyprus, September 1984 (*S. M. D. Alexander*) (Canon F-1, 400 mm FD; XP1; f4.5, 1/2000)

126. Bottom right, winter Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*, Florida, USA, October 1984 (*J. B. & S. Bottomley*) (Nikon F, 300 mm Nikkor; XP1; f11, 1/1000)







127. Male Rook *Corvus frugilegus* preening, Worcestershire, April 1984 (Mark Hamblin) (Pentax MX, 300 mm Pentax; f8, 1/250)

128. Female Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*, Powys, June 1984 (A. R. Hamblin) (Olympus OM2N, Vivitar 70-210 zoom; FPE; electronic flash, f16, 1/60)

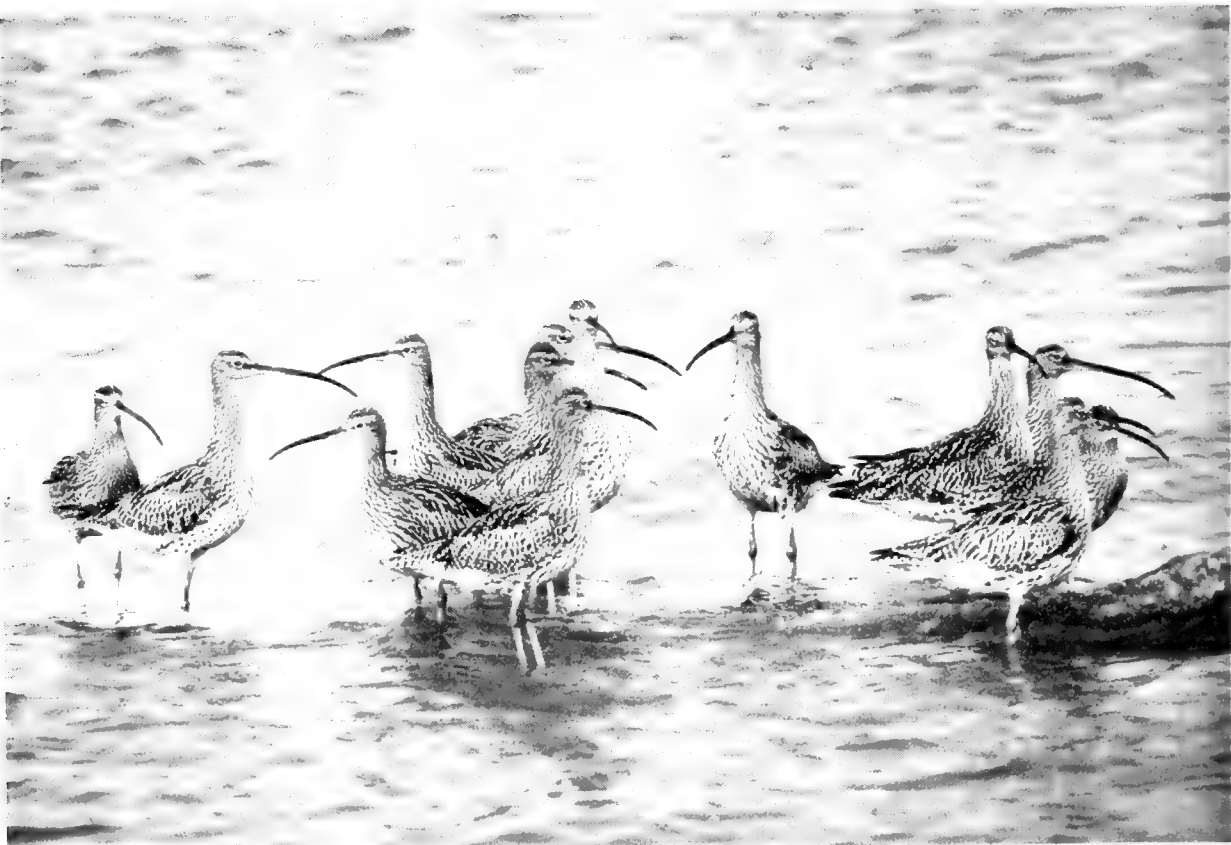




29. Female Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, Norfolk, June 1984 (K. J. Carlson) (Nikon FE2, 200 mm Micro Nikkor; FP4; f8, auto)

30. Male Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, Norfolk, March 1984 (K. J. Carlson) (Nikon FE2, 135 mm Nikkor; FP4; f5.6, 1/125)





131. Curlews *Numenius arquata*, Merseyside, March 1984 (Anthony J. Bond) (Canon A-1, 400 mm Soligor; FP4; f11, 1/250)

132. Common Terns *Sterna hirundo*, Norfolk, June 1984 (Anthony J. Bond) (Canon A-1, Canon 70-210 mm zoom; FP4; 1/500, auto)



- 133.** Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*, Norfolk, March 1984 (K. J. Carlson) (Nikon FE2, 135 mm Nikkor; FP4; f/11, 1/250)



134. Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, Norway, winter 1984 (Bjørn Huseby) (Hasselblad EL-M, 120 mm, HP-5, f22, 1/500 electronic flash, 2 lamps)



Notes

One adult Grey Heron killing another on feeding territory During a study of the feeding ecology of the Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* at Newburgh, Aberdeenshire, Grampian, I observed a territorial adult fighting with an immature; it started at about 15.30 GMT and lasted for 25 minutes; the immature, a male weighing 1,120 g, died four hours after the fight.

From the beginning of the study, in late October 1981, three adult herons regularly fished on Foveran Burn, each defending a territory; they were individually recognisable by marked differences in plumage characteristics. Two immatures also used the same stretch of the burn, but were chased off as soon as they were detected by the territory-owners. One of these immatures, a first-year, used the lower section of the burn and intruded on two of the adults; the other, a second-year, regularly used the upper section, intruding on the third adult. Physical encounters between these individuals had not been seen previously. On 14th January 1982, however, the non-territorial second-year heron was chased by the third adult from the latter's feeding territory onto a field 50 m from the burn, where the adult continued the attack: it took hold of the immature, which was sitting on the grass, stood on its back and hit its head with the closed bill; it often opened its bill and held the younger bird's head crosswise between lower and upper mandibles for up to 40 seconds. This injured the immature: in particular, both its eyes were damaged and the lid of its left eye destroyed. It attempted weak upward thrusts with its bill at the throat of the adult; after 15 minutes, these blows became fewer and it laid its head on the ground. Following this, the adult began to walk around its victim, attacking it each time the immature raised its bill. The fight ended after 25 minutes, when the immature was lying motionless in the grass and the adult flew back to its feeding site. I picked up the injured heron, put it in an aviary and fed it on fish; when I returned three hours later, it was dead. Its skull was not broken, but a haematoma was found at the back of its head.

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Mouth and gape colours of singing Marsh and Reed Warblers W. G. Harvey and R. F. Porter (*Brit. Birds* 77: 393-411) mentioned the overlap in mouth colour of *Acrocephalus* warblers. Field observations on a study population of Marsh Warblers *A. palustris* and sympatric Reed Warblers *A. scirpaceus* confirm that the mouth colour of the two species overlaps considerably, and that the suggestion by J. Cantelo (*Brit. Birds* 77: 214-215) of a clear-cut difference between the species is not supported by the evidence. Examination in the hand showed that no Marsh Warblers had yellow mouths, a few had yellow-orange mouths, but most had orange mouths. The difference between the yellow-orange and orange was extremely slight and hardly discernible in the field. Thus, the mouth colour of singing

Marsh Warblers in the study population appeared orange in the field and inseparable from that of the local Reed Warblers, which all had orange mouths.

J. Cantelo cited a note by P. Davis (*Brit. Birds* 58: 184-188), who in fact referred not to mouth colour but to gape colour. As Harvey & Porter pointed out, Marsh Warblers show variation in the colour of the inner edge of the gape. In my study population, the gape colour of most Marsh Warblers was yellow, with some showing yellow-orange. Variation did occur also with Reed Warblers. Most Reed Warbler gapes were orange, but a few were yellow-orange. The effect of this was that most singing Marsh Warblers showed considerable contrast between the yellow gape edge and the orange mouth, whereas there was little contrast between the gape colour and mouth colour of singing Reed Warblers. Some Marsh Warblers showed contrast such that the gape appeared as a bold and distinct yellow boundary to an orange mouth. Little contrast was, however, shown by those singing Marsh Warblers with yellow-orange gape edges, and one singing Reed Warbler was seen with yellowish gape edges.

Although the bold gape and mouth contrast might well prove to be diagnostic for some Marsh Warblers, there appears to be sufficient overlap to give rise to caution in attempting to separate the two species by this character.

Since the inner edge of the gape and the mouth are almost invariably visible only on singing individuals, however, the identification should be fairly straightforward anyway because of the considerable difference in quality, structure and delivery of the song. In the rare instance of encountering a Reed Warbler with unusually high mimetic ability, mouth or gape colour cannot be used as an absolute distinction. Correct identification of singing spring adults is, however, quite possible on a careful assessment of plumage, jizz and structural criteria, as already described (*Brit. Birds* 58: 184-188; 71: 122; 72: 190-191; 77: 393-411).

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Notes on Short-toed Treecreepers from southern Spain I have examined specimens of Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* from the collection of the Doñana Biological Station, Sevilla, and live birds in Sierra Morena and Doñana National Park, Spain. The specimens are all from southern Spain (where Treecreeper *C. familiaris* does not exist), and notes on the plumage and biometrics of this population may be of interest. In this region, Short-toed Treecreeper generally prefers areas of sparse trees such as cork oaks *Quercus suber*, open forests of stone pines *Pinus pinea* with some undergrowth shrub, or groves of olives *Olea europaea* (Herrera 1978).

Svensson (1984) indicated that the majority of Short-toed Treecreepers have a complete white border on the outer web of the big feather of the alula, whereas the white border is lacking or broken on the majority of Treecreepers. Fig. 1 shows the variation in this feature on the specimens which I examined, from no white at all (A) to a very obvious white border (I). Between these extremes, there was much variation which had no

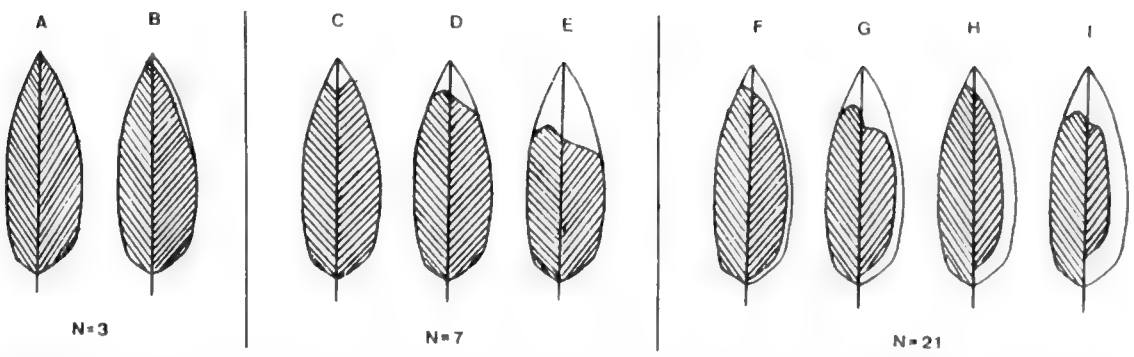


Fig. 1. Variation in pattern on big feather of alula of 31 specimens of Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* from southern Spain. Types F and G were most numerous (six and 13 respectively)

relation to age or sex. Of 31 specimens, ten (32%) did not have a complete white border, this being lacking or broken in the same way as on most Treecreepers. This shows that this feature on its own is not reliable for separating the two species in southern Spain, a similar situation to that elsewhere in Europe (Svensson 1984).

Measurements (in mm) of the hind claw showed a mean value of 7.47 ± 0.4 ($N=28$) and a range of 6.5-8.4. Measurements of the bill showed a mean value of 18.8 ± 1.4 ($N=34$) and a range of 16.5-22.05. The discriminant proposed by Svensson (1984), concerning the idea that the ratio of the hind claw to the bill (hind claw length as a percentage of bill length) is less than 45.6 in Short-toed Treecreeper, was correct for all specimens examined. No difference between sexes was noted, although the sex of every specimen was not determined.

The discriminant suggested by Mead & Wallace (1976, and included in Svensson 1984) that the hind claw of Short-toed Treecreeper is less than $0.14 \times \text{bill length} + 5.6$ (whereas that of Treecreeper is greater) was doubtful in only two cases and correct in the rest (93%), as shown in fig. 2.

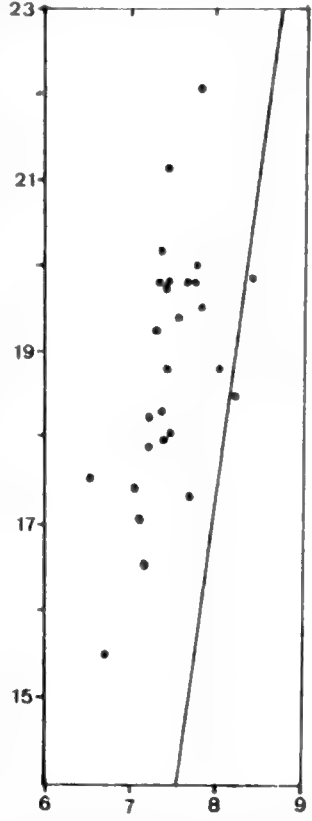


Fig. 2. Bill/hind claw plotted for 27 specimens of Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* from southern Spain, showing strong correlation ($r_s = 0.548$, $P < 0.01$; $Y = 0.15X + 4.48$). Thick line represents hind claw: $0.14 \times \text{bill} + 5.6$.

As for the coloration of the upperparts (Chapman 1984), the Short-toed Treecreepers that I examined appeared darker and less striped with pale than on a single Norwegian specimen of Treecreeper which I have studied.

I am grateful to Juan Manuel de Benito and Rafael Cadenas from ICONA, who permitted me to stay in the Doñana National Park, and to Carlos Ibanez who arranged access to the specimens in the Doñana Biological Station.

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135. Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*, Spain, July 1984, showing complete white margin on big feather of alula matching type G in fig. 1 (M. Rodriguez)

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 SVENSSON, L. 1984. *Identification Guide to European Passerines*. 3rd edn. Stockholm.

Further comments on treecreeper identification M. S. Chapman (*Brit. Birds* 77: 262-263) stated that, compared with Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*, Treecreeper *C. familiaris* has uniform, more richly brown-coloured upperparts with more prominent white streaking, particularly on the nape and upper mantle. When preparing an identification paper on the two species (Hirschfeld 1984), I came across specimens of Short-toed Treecreepers which had virtually the same coloration on the upperparts as Treecreepers. They were collected in Spain and Crete, and were thus from other parts of Europe than those studied by Chapman. The coloration of the upperparts is a good indication of the identity of treecreepers in northern Europe, but may need to be used with care, especially in southern Europe. The prominence of the streaking can vary, as shown by the Treecreeper in plate 136. I agree with C. J. Mead's comment on the note, that such relatively subtle differences as prominence of streaks and coloration of upperparts may be of limited use for the field observer viewing a single treecreeper.

Laurel Tucker (*Brit. Birds* 77: 263-264) invited comment on bill colour as a possible criterion for separating the two species. As early as 1937, Niethammer drew attention to differences in colour of the upper mandible of treecreepers. Contrary to Tucker, however, he stated that the upper mandible of Short-toed Treecreeper is darker than that of Treecreeper, and plates 137 and 138 show the feature in accordance with Niethammer. The bill colour apparently varies individually and is therefore of little or no use as a means of separating the two species.



136. Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* of nominate northern subspecies with dark sides to upper mandible. Pattern on upperparts of this individual less contrasting than usual. Sweden, February 1981 (Sture Persson)

137. Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* of nominate northern subspecies with light sides to upper mandible. Supercilium is unusually short, but contrasting. Sweden, March 1980 (Jan Schützer)

138. Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*, Sweden, 1983. Sides of upper mandible dark, and streaking on upperparts quite prominent. Note indistinct, greyish supercilium (Mikael Jonassohn)



I agree with Tucker that bill length and shape are a good aid when identifying adults, but variations occur and I have seen juvenile Short-toed Treecreepers with bills shorter than those of adult Treecreeper. Again, judging bill length and shape of a single bird demands care and experience.

I believe that the key to treecreeper identification is in the appearance of the supercilium. Chapman mentioned that the supercilium of Treecreeper is broad and contrasting. I should like to put it this way: Short-toed Treecreeper has a greyish-white to yellowish-white supercilium, whereas that of Treecreeper is pure white. The supercilia of Treecreeper are longer and broader, most often extending to the base of the bill and often (probably only on the northern race *C. f. familiaris*) joining as a white line above the base of the bill (see plate 136). The supercilia of Short-toed Treecreeper are always short and never pure white, and often fade away towards the bill. They never join above the base of the bill and do not contrast with the rest of the head as much as those of Treecreeper. I have seen three juvenile Short-toed Treecreepers which even lacked any indication at all of a supercilium in front of the eye.

The whiteness of the supercilium is very obvious on Treecreepers of the northern subspecies *familiaris*, but even those of the Continental subspecies *C. f. macrodactyla* show a white and contrasting supercilium. Since the British subspecies *C. f. britannica* is very unlikely to occur in Sweden, I studied specimens of it only briefly, but this feature seems to apply to it as well.

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 NIETHAMMER, G. 1937. *Handbuch der Deutschen Vogelkunde*. Vol. 1. Leipzig.

Magpie containing warble-fly insecticide Two recent notes in *British Birds* (78: 49-50) raise the subject of Magpies *Pica pica* perching on mammals to feed. In this respect, the following event may be of interest.

On 4th November 1984, I was given a Magpie found by a farmer at Llangaffo, Anglesey, Gwynedd. The bird had been found alive on the ground, where it was still breathing, but apparently partially paralysed (its legs were rigidly extended). The farmer killed it.

Post-mortem examination of the whole bird by the Veterinary Investigation Centre, ADAS, Bangor, Gwynedd, showed no gross evidence of disease and no significant bacterial infection. Organo-phosphorous analysis of the gizzard content and liver by the Environmental Chemistry Section, MAFF, Tolworth, Surrey, detected residues of the chemical compound 'famphur' at 3500mg/kg in the gizzard contents. It was not apparent how the bird might have ingested the compound.

It is appropriate to mention, however, that, in the period of 'about six-eight weeks' prior to 4th November, the same farmer and two neighbours found 'about 20-30 dead Magpies', also with 'stiff legs', in the same place (about three adjoining fields on the edge of the Malltraeth Marsh, about 1 km northwest of Llangaffo), where the aforementioned bird

was also collected. On 18th October, the farmer there had treated 32 Hereford cattle with a proprietary 'pour-on' dressing against infestation by warble-fly *Hypoderma bovis* on 18th October, and other farmers in the vicinity had treated their cattle similarly around the same date.

The dressing has a liquid paraffin base containing the organo-phosphorus compound famphur. The dressing is systemic in its action, that is, having been poured on to the backs of domestic cattle, a proportion is absorbed through the skin and into the mammalian blood circulation with the purpose of killing warble-fly larvae widely distributed in tissues throughout the body. Such organo-phosphorous compounds are potentially highly toxic to various arthropods (e.g. lice, ticks, keds) present on the backs of the mammals at the time of application. Warble-fly dressing is normally applied during September to November, but additionally in March to June, if warbles are noticed on the backs of cattle in a given locality.

D. G. Hewett and M. J. Prince advised me during the preparation of this note.

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Carrion Crows taking insect prey on the wing M. J. Rogers's note on a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* taking flying insects (*Brit. Birds* 75: 387) prompts the following. On the hot evening of 7th August 1982, at Lancaster, I watched two Carrion Crows with a number of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* pursuing swarming ants in flight. The crows appeared only slightly less adept than the gulls, although it was impossible to determine their degree of feeding success. A few minutes later, a Jackdaw *C. monedula* was flying among some gulls at a nearby swarm of insects.

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Readers having similar observations that include the bird and insect species involved are invited to submit them for inclusion in a possible future summary. EDS

Letters

Bill coloration of treecreepers The note by Laurel Tucker (*Brit. Birds* 77: 263-264) questions if the upper mandible coloration could assist in the field separation of the two European treecreepers *Certhia*. Photographs, in *Våra Fåglar i Norden* (1942) by C. T. Holmström *et al.* and in *Atlas of European Birds* (1960) by K. H. Voous, show Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris* of the northern race *familiaris* without the whole upper mandible dark; this was suggested as a feature indicative of Short-toed Treecreeper *C. brachydactyla*. A. PYM

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Identification of Wheatear and Isabelline Wheatear Tye & Tye (*Brit. Birds* 76: 427-437) stated that adult male Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* retain the distinctive summer plumage during the winter. In fact, after the complete moult, they attain a quite different plumage: mainly brown upperparts, paler on ear-coverts (but lores still blackish), more buffish on underparts, and acquiring pale fringes/edges to wing-coverts and flight feathers. They are, however, still quite distinctive and should not be difficult to separate from Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellina*. Tye & Tye also stated that on female and first-winter male Wheatears 'the flanks and belly are white or greyish-white' and with 'usually a pale orange-buff wash on the throat and sides of neck, extending onto the breast'. This is usually so in breeding-plumaged females, but Wheatears in winter plumage frequently show a fairly strong buffish tinge to the flanks and belly—like Isabelline. More typically, Isabelline shows a contrastingly whitish throat, often extending to the anterior ear-coverts. To my eyes, and *contra* Tye & Tye (76:



139. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*. Note shape and tone of supercilium; belly not very buffish on this individual. Egypt, September 1980 (Uffe Gjol Sørensen & Ib Petersen)

140. Two first-winter Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe*, one of northern race *leucorrhoa* (left), and one of nominate race. Note tone and shape of supercilium. Sweden, September 1982 (Thomas Carlén)





141. Head of female Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* showing typical head-pattern. Note tone and shape of supercilium; this individual has exceptionally long bill, note that it can be 'hooked' at tip. Israel, March 1984 (Urban Olsson)



142. Female Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* showing very pale plumage, and especially lores; supercilium typical. Israel, March 1984 (Urban Olsson)



143. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (probably male). Note tone and shape of supercilium. Israel, March 1984 (Urban Olsson)

431), Isabelline normally shows a fairly obvious supercilium, usually tinged buffish throughout its length, sometimes more buff at rear; it normally does not extend onto the forehead, and is usually more tapering behind the eye than on Wheatear. On Wheatear, the supercilium is buffy in front of the eye, often extending diffusely onto the forehead, and whitish to paler buffish above and behind the eye, a pattern found on no other West Palearctic wheatear; it often widens behind the eye, ending rather abruptly. Finally, I consider the colour of the lores an unreliable character because of the wide variations in both species (some Wheatears show pale lores).

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Red-rumped Swallow and bird-artists Derek Goodwin's letter (*Brit. Birds* 77: 326-328) reminds me of another species often misleadingly portrayed by bird-artists: the Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*. Photographs in, for instance, Gooders (1969-71) and Ferguson-Lees (1963) show that the rump, sides of rump and vent are all pale, while the tail, uppertail-coverts and undertail-coverts are dark. In flight, this gives the bird a distinct 'long-bodied' appearance behind the wings, with the sharply delineated 'tail' apparently glued on, an effect visible at long range when other plumage features are harder to discern. Jonsson (1982) shows it quite well, but several of the major European field guides portray far too much dark on the sides of the rump, thereby masking one of the better characters.

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 JONSSON, L. 1982. *Birds of the Mediterranean and Alps*. London.

Amphibian calls and small crakes On 16th June 1984, R. Woods telephoned me and played a tape-recording of a steadily repeated, high 'kwek . . . kwek . . . kwek' call with a nasal quality, reminiscent of a high-pitched call of a Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*. This had been heard from dusk to midnight over recent evenings, emanating from the base of thick bushes growing out over the edge of a small marshy pool near Newton Abbot, South Devon. During the following week, a small band of observers gathered at the pool, but calls were by then more intermittent, and were last reported on 21st June. No views of the caller were obtained.

John Burton and E. D. H. Johnson (*Brit. Birds* 77: 87-104) listed no species confusable with birds among the amphibians and insects which seemed likely to occur in South Devon. We therefore considered a small crake—Little *Porzana parva* or Baillon's *P. pusilla*—the most likely producer of the calls. I telephoned the BBC Natural History Unit, who played down the telephone Little Crake recordings; these seemed to resemble the calls at Newton Abbot. We subsequently sent our recordings to John Burton. Both he and Nigel Tucker identified them as belonging to the European tree frog *Hyla arborea*, and commented (*in litt.*): 'There have been several introduction attempts with this species, mainly in Southwest England, and it would seem this individual has either been released into the Newton Abbot pool or found its way from one of the introduced colonies.'

Burton & Johnson referred to possible confusion between European tree frog and Little and Baillon's Crakes (77: 96-97, 99, 104), but few observers would have expected to meet this amphibian in a feral state in Southwest England.

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Announcements

'The Birdwatcher's A-Z' was named as 'The "British Birds" Best Bird Book of the Year' for 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 411). The review in *British Birds* (74: 409-410) referred to it as 'a most useful addition to any birdwatcher's library'. Its price then was £14.95.

As an exclusive offer to *British Birds* subscribers, this book can now be obtained for £10.95 through British BirdShop (see page ix).

'A Guide to the Birds of Nepal' By Tim & Carol Inskipp, this new, substantial book (392 pages, over 670 maps, many line-drawings and eight very useful colour plates of difficult-to-identify warblers and finches) will be published by Croom Helm next month. The paintings, by Craig Robson and Richard Grimmett, will be very useful to birders visiting any Asian country.

By a special arrangement—exclusive to subscribers to *British Birds* and members of the Oriental Bird Club—you can obtain your copy post free (to UK & Irish addresses), immediately that it is available, through British BirdShop, and with a reduction of £2.00 on all prepublication orders. You must be a *British Birds* subscriber to take advantage of this offer. Please use the British BirdShop form on page ix *now*.

'Eric Hosking's Owls' This book, filled with colour photographs by Eric Hosking and David Hosking, and with text by Dr Jim Flegg, is now available in soft cover for only £7.95 (original hardback price was £12.95 in 1982: review *Brit. Birds* 75: 435). Please order using the British BirdShop form on page ix.

Huge increase in 'BB' subscription price Don't worry! It isn't planned. But it would be inevitable if subscribers did not buy their bird books by using the British BirdShop form. Purchases of bird books using the British BirdShop form provide a considerable subsidy on the subscription price, to the benefit of *everyone*. Please use the British BirdShop form (on page ix in this issue) whenever you want to buy a bird book. Books on our monthly list are supplied post free to UK & Irish addresses. Payments can be by cheque, postal order or Giro transfer in pounds sterling, or in US dollars. *Please have a look at page ix now.*

'BB' trip to Thailand Would you like to accompany Phil Round and Dr Tim Sharrock on a special two-week *British Birds* trip to Thailand in January/February 1986?

If there is sufficient interest, a trip—limited to eight to 14 people (all of whom will be *BB* subscribers)—will be arranged, aimed to provide *BB* readers with an as-cheap-as-is-sensible visit to the best birding areas in that exciting country (see January 1985 issue for potential discoveries: many Siberian species are 'certs'). We shall not be roughing it, and accommodation will be in good (but not luxury-class) hotels in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. We shall visit a wide variety of habitats, from the coastal lagoons of the

Gulf of Thailand to the jungle of Khao Yai and the forested mountaintops around Chiang Mai.

The trip will be geared not only to provide non-stop birding for those who wish to do so, but also to allow a more-relaxed and leisurely approach to birdwatching for those who want a birdwatching *holiday*.

The price will be as cheap as we can make it (*British Birds* will aim to recover costs, but not make any profit), but will depend upon the number of participants, the currency exchange rates later this year, and so on; it will probably be about £1,200-£1,600. The dates are also not yet firm, but will probably be about 25th January to 10th February.

If you are interested, *please write now*, and we will send you full details as soon as they are available. It will be only when we know that this trip is likely to be popular that we can decide to go ahead with firm plans for it.

Please write NOW, to BB Thai Tour, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Oriental Bird Club No less than 129 enthusiasts trekked to that infamous Eastern city, Norwich, on 23rd March, for the inaugural meeting of the Oriental Bird Club. After a welcome and introduction by the Chairman, Richard Grimmett, we were transported to the real Orient by Nigel Redman, with a mouth-watering selection of slides showing habitats and birds from Pakistan and Nepal through India and Thailand to Malaysia and Indonesia. Carol Inskipp then outlined the grave conservation problems faced in the region: largely—and predictably—habitat destruction. James Wolstencroft rounded off the first session with a detailed look at the birds and mammals of one small area: Corbett National Park in Northern India. Suitably refreshed, the meeting reconvened to hear Mark Beaman's entertaining account of two trips to the forbidden land of China. Attitudes are fast changing and, whilst individuals may have greater difficulties than a group, birding in China is becoming a feasible proposition. After the highly successful launch of the Club, many

members stayed on to talk exotic birds in the bar. The next meeting is planned for the late autumn in London. (*Contributed by Ian Dawson*)

Nordmann's Greenshank in colour The first-ever photograph of Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* appears in colour in the April issue of *BBC Wildlife*. Also for the first time in the West (so far as we know), there are colour stills of nesting Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, Relict Gull *Larus relictus*, White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera*, Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis* and Eversmann's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythronotus*. (*Contributed by Jeffery Boswall*)

New recorder for Somerset From 1st July 1985, the new recorder for Somerset will be Brian Rabbitts, 88 Church Road, West Huntspill, Highbridge, Somerset.

Menorca records Ed Mackrill has asked us to mention that progress is now being made on organising recording for Menorca, which is now being visited by an increasing number

of birdwatchers. Future visitors are invited to send a note of all they see—common or rare—to Antonio Escandell, Miranda de Cala-Fonts 13, Apt. 302, Villa Carlos, Menorca, Spain.

Siberian Cranes We see from the *IUCN Bulletin* (15: 4-6) that over 800 Siberian Cranes *Grus leucogeranus* have been found wintering on Lake Poyang in Jiangxi Province, one of the largest freshwater lakes in China, an area not surveyed since the Cultural Revolution. Although a 22,000-ha nature reserve was established in 1984, the marshes around the lake are threatened with drying out through the construction of dams on the Yangtze River.

'Lothian Bird Report' The bulk of the 1983 *Lothian Bird Report*, the fifth in the series, is devoted to the systematic list of occurrences and status of 221 species recorded in the area, but there are also 13 short reports or features on other activities of local interest. It is now available, price £2.50 (including p & p), from Michael Leven, 13 Henderson Row, Edinburgh.

Tyneside Bird Club renamed The Tyneside Bird Club was formed in 1958 and has grown during the past 26 years to a membership of 250. The club's monthly bulletin has an uninterrupted publishing history to the present day. The club's sphere of influence, however, quickly spread over Northumberland, and in 1970 *Birds in Northumbria*, the official county ornithological report, was launched, covering Northumberland and that part of the old county of Northumberland now contained within Tyne & Wear. At its Annual General Meeting in October 1984, the club's members decided that a change of name was required, and the club was renamed 'The Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club'.

Colin Rhind (1905-1984) Colin died in December, after being ill for some months. Born in Middlesex, he was always extremely keen on all forms of natural history: his interest in and knowledge of butterflies and moths was as great as his knowledge of birds. He was particularly interested in the education of young, budding naturalists, and many people in Ireland can thank him for his determination to show how much there was to learn and enjoy in natural history. It was Colin who founded the Cork Young Natur-

alists' Association in 1970, and, when in 1978 he moved to Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, and became warden of the observatory, he not only brought life into the place, but also started running courses for the younger generation. In 1981, he retired from the observatory due to ill health and moved to Skibbereen, where he was regularly visited by those travelling to and from 'Cape'. We, his friends, naturally miss him, but are grateful to have known him. (Contributed by Christopher J. Wilson)



144. Colin Rhind (1905-1984) (Cathy O'Sullivan)

Irish mystery slides competition The *British Birds* collection of 50 mystery slides, which have been shown now at a number of British venues for local societies, were taken around various Irish Wildbird Conservancy branch meetings on our behalf by Killian Mullarney, who conducted the champagne-prize competitions. The top scores were as follows. In Wexford on 11th December: 1st Oscar Merne (39 correct), equal 2nd Dave Daly and Alyn Walsh (each with 30). At Cork on 14th December: 1st Mark Shorten (38 correct), 2nd John Coveney (36) and 3rd John Lynch (35). In Wicklow on 25th January: 1st Michael Healy (28 correct), 2nd Shay Fagan (26) and 3rd Andrew McMillan (25). In Dublin on 8th February: 1st Paul Archer (41 correct), 2nd Jim Fitzharris (40) and 3rd Peter McDermot (38). We gather that it was often the common birds which created most problems (perhaps the audiences felt that *British Birds* would not include slides of the commonplace!). The *BB* Editorial Board has asked us to express its

thanks to Killian for undertaking these promotional lectures.

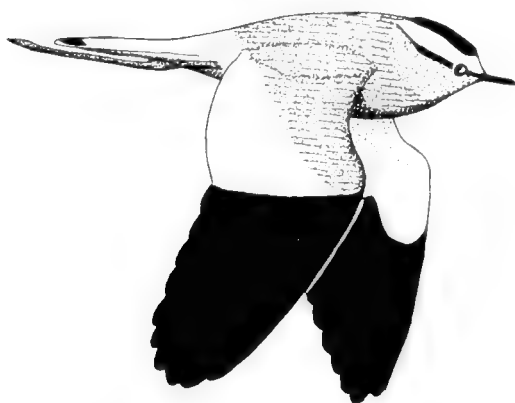
Birds of Turkey The fourth booklet in this enterprising and valuable series, covering the birds of the Kizilirmak Delta, is now available, price £1.50 (including p & p), from the Ornithological Society of the Middle East, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. The three earlier issues, covering Ercek Gölü, Seyfe Gölü and Kizilcahamam, are all still available from OSME, price £1.00 each (including p & p).

Owl prow! One of the most imaginative schemes ever to record the presence and distribution of a single species was launched by the London Wildlife Trust, with a great fanfare of publicity, in March. Quite simply, the Trust was inviting everyone to write or phone in with reports of Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* heard or seen in the London area. We know that phone calls began to come in by the thousand, so we look forward to learning more about this interesting project in due course.

Those misprints Misprints are often amusing, but are seldom so brilliantly appropriate as this one from *Report No. 2 of the World Working Group on Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills*: 'Scared Ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*): Endangered in the past, now no recent information due to war in the area . . .'

Nor are they always so good as the photograph of a Black Noddy *Anous minutus* in the journal *Bokmakierie* (36 (4): 97), which was, the caption tells us, taken in Australia. It was (accidentally?) printed upside down.

'A Rocha' The project to establish a Christian Field Centre and Bird Observatory in Southwest Portugal has just taken a significant step forward with the purchase of a large house with accommodation for ten guests on the Alvor estuary near Portimao. Anyone interested in staying there when it opens at the end of this year should contact Dr R. A. Pullan, 13 West Drive, Upton, Wirral, Merseyside L49 6JX. English versions of the project's first bird report are also available, price £1.00, from the same address.



Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

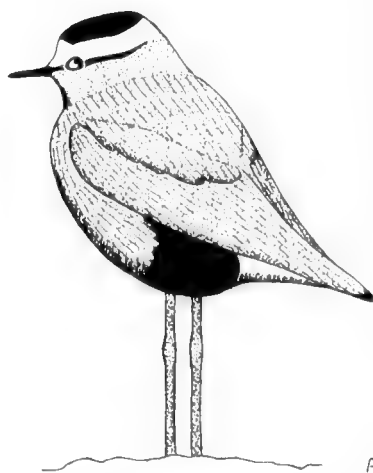
The dates in the report refer to March unless otherwise stated.

Weather and early spring migration

The month began with mild, unsettled

westerly weather, becoming progressively quieter as pressure rose in the south. The first

Recent reports



AMS

Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* began to arrive, 20 at Ballyvaughan (Co. Clare) on 10th being an exceptional number, most reports referring to singles. A few **Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia* were seen on the English south coast and a **House Martin** *Delichon urbica* at Wells (Norfolk) on 9th. Sightings of **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* were also very few and mainly inland. Exceptional records were of a **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus* at Mid Yell (Shetland) on 9th, a **Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* of the nominate race on Orkney on 3rd, a **Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* at Harrogate (North Yorkshire) on 5th, a **Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* at Eyemouth (Borders) on 7th, and a **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* in Co. Cork from 6th.

From 13th, an anticyclone developed to the west and, with colder air arriving from the north, further migration was inhibited. As the centre of pressure moved eastwards across into Europe winds turned easterly, then southeasterly, still bringing cold air. Undeterred, a **Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* visited Kingswear (Devon) on 17th. Temperatures recovered on 22nd, as wet cyclonic westerly weather returned, and a few more migrants arrived when conditions were favourable. A **Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* was seen on Guernsey (Channel Islands) on 25th, a **Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 23rd and a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* on the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) on 31st. An easterly movement of winter **thrushes** *Turdus* over Cambridgeshire on 24th, and a northerly passage of **Meadow Pipits** *Anthus pratensis* at Walney (Cumbria) on 30th were the only visible signs of migration.

A **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*, singing in London, was more likely to have been a new arrival than a wintering bird.

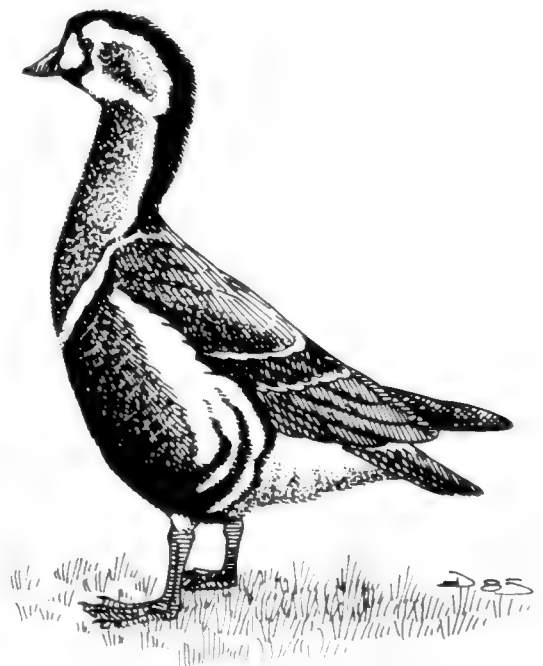
Wildfowl

Wildfowl migration is less disrupted by weather, but a flock of 41 Greenland **White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons flavirostris* chose to break their flight north at Meiklewater (Orkney) on 13th, at the onset of adverse winds. A **Bean Goose** *A. fabalis* was also present on the islands on 10th. A wintering flock of **Bewick's Swans** *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, which included a 'Whistling Swan' *C. c. columbianus*, found in January at South Slob (Co. Wexford) had departed by mid month, and the **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* was last seen on the Isle of Sheppey (Kent) on 23rd. Also staying into March

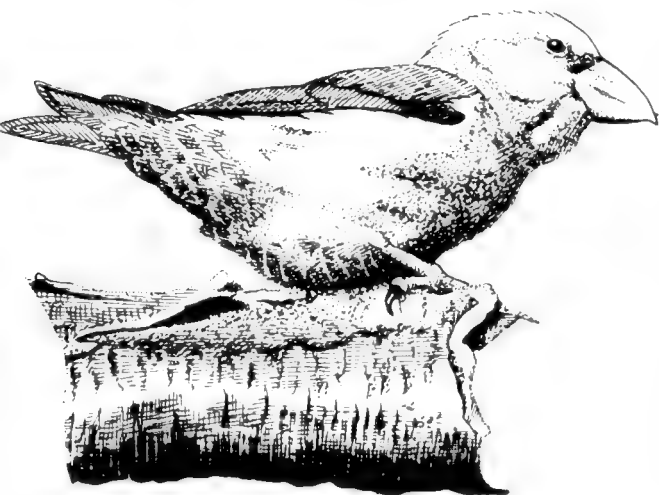
were **King Eiders** *Somateria spectabilis* at Embo (Highland) and at Mullet (Co. Mayo), a pair being seen on 17th, two male **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* at Murvagh (Co. Donegal) until 6th, and the **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* at Whalsay (Shetland). A **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* at Sullom (Shetland) on 1st was a rare find for the islands, probably a result of the earlier freeze-up of inland waters. Further winter records of **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* were of one at Loch of Harray (Orkney) on 14th and another in Co. Wexford. Of the Nearctic species, **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* continued to be the most frequently seen, with new finds at Norby (Shetland) on 13th, one in Lancashire, and four in Ireland. An **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* appeared inshore at Filey (North Yorkshire) on 31st, and 'Green-winged' **Teals** *A. crecca carolinensis* were identified at Walthamstow Reservoir (London), and at Dogmersfield Lake (Hampshire) on 24th, following an earlier report of one at Fairburn Ings (North Yorkshire) on 16th February. **Garganeys** *A. querquedula* were reported on 2nd in Norfolk, with a scattering of sightings thereafter, four on the Ouse Washes being the largest number.

Birds of prey

The **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus*, reported last month in Devon, was sighted at Exminster Marshes on 13th and subsequently at



Radipole Lake and Stanpit Marsh (Dorset) on 27th. Records of other wintering species included a roost of 16 **Hen Harriers** *Circus cyaneus* at Elmley (Kent) on 19th, **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* at Kergord (Shetland) and two on Orkney, and a **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* at Martlesham (Suffolk) on 25th. A very early report of an **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* at Clevedon (Avon) on 12th February was followed by another from Scunthorpe (Humberside) on 30th. The most intriguing record was of an **Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo* in Worcestershire on 27th, but its wild status may be in doubt.



Wading birds

Wader movements started to be noticeable during the month. There was a gathering of 4,000 **Knots** *Calidris canutus* at Walney on 1st, and **Greenshanks** *Tringa nebularia* began passing through there, with two on 10th. On the same day, a **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* was found at Elmley, with others subsequently noted at Filey on 25th and in Co. Wexford on 23rd. An early **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* reached Shetland also by 10th, and about 180 had collected on the Ouse Washes by 30th. Before the change to colder weather, **Lapwings** *Vanellus vanellus* were observed moving eastwards over Cambridgeshire during quite warm settled weather on 12th. **Little Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius dubius*, as other migrants, were slow to arrive, being seen mainly after 29th. A **Sociable Plover** *Chettusia gregaria*, which stayed on Dartford Marshes (Kent) from 19th to at least 30th, was in splendid plumage.

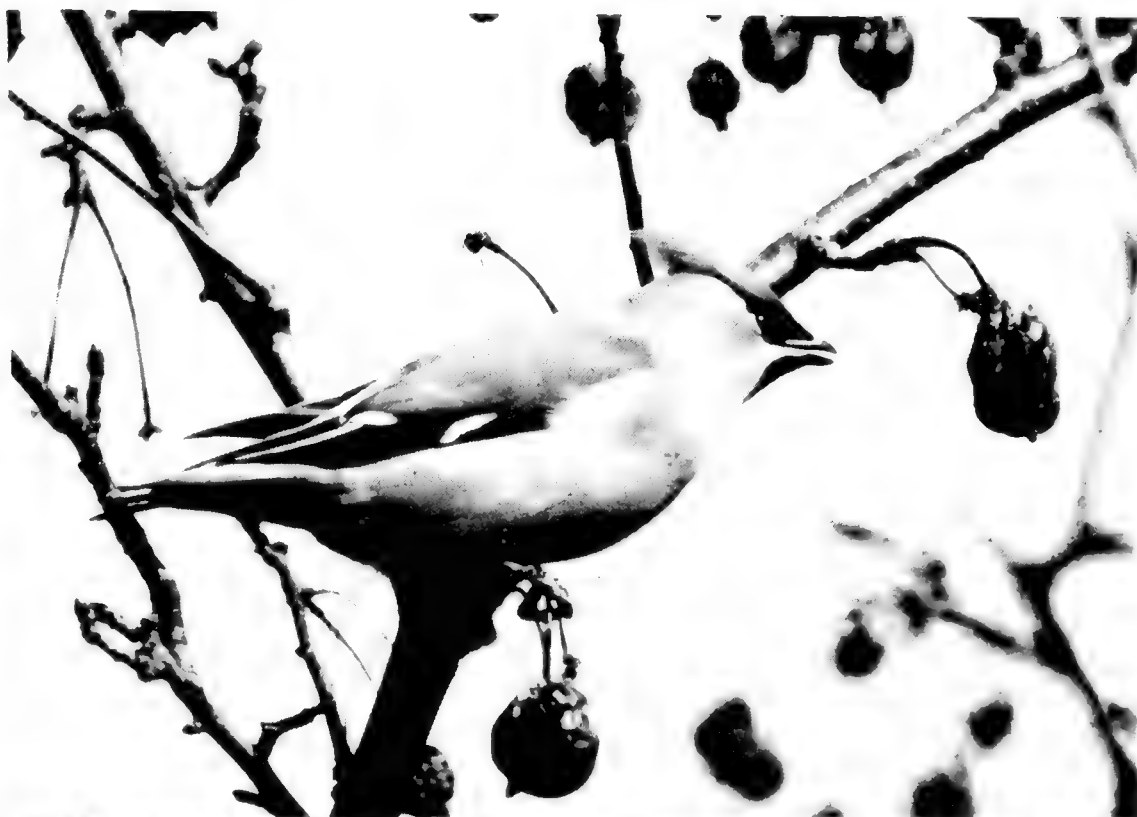
Gulls and seabirds

The Hermaness (Shetland) **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophrys* was back at its usual site by 10th, and a wandering **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea* was seen off Filey on 9th. At the same locality, a 'blue phase' **Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis* was present for a few days. Eight adult **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* were counted at Belfast on 13th among 20 Common Gulls *L. canus*, five in Donegal and, with further reports of three birds each at Mullet (Co. Mayo) on 17th and at Plymouth (Devon), the increase in records over the years does perhaps indicate more than just increased observer awareness. The more-obvious **Mediterranean Gull** *L. melanocephalus* was reported in familiar numbers from southwest England, with three at Plymouth and a single at Slapton (Devon). The lack of **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucooides* and **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus* was noticeable this winter in Shetland waters, and this month the number of sightings on all coasts was low. The first migrant **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** *L. fuscus* to reach Shetland were sighted on 9th, and returning **Sandwich Terns** *Sterna sandwichensis* became increasingly common after 23rd. A brief one-day appearance of a **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* was an exciting find in Co. Cork.

Winter rarities

The **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* stayed on the River Shannon near Killaloe (Co. Clare) until at least 23rd, the **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* remained on the River Yealm (Devon) for yet another month, and the very obliging **Little Crane** *Porzana parva* at the Cuckmere Valley (East Sussex) stayed until 16th (plates 99-101 & 146). An **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* could still be found at Wells until mid month, and, for the second year running, the **Parrot Crossbills** *Loxia pytyopsittacus* there fledged young. The only report of a **Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus* was one at Guisborough (Cleveland) on 17th (plate 145). A **Shore Lark** *Eremophila alpestris*, a rarity for Ireland, was present at Larne (Co. Antrim) from February into March (plates 147 & 148), and the Belfast **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* could still be found throughout the month (plates 149 & 150).

-
145. Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*, Cleveland, March 1985 (David Contantine)
 146. Female Little Crane *Porzana parva*, East Sussex, March 1985 (Paul Doherty)
 147 & 148. Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris*, Co. Antrim, March 1985 (P. Kelly)





149 & 150. White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Northern Ireland, March 1985 (Ron Thompson)



Latest news

Cold, late spring continued, with many summer visitors hardly in evidence, but **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* at Wells (Norfolk), in which county also a few **Pied Flycatchers** *F. hypoleuca*, **Wryneck**

Jynx torquilla, **Hoopoe**, **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* and over 20 **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* (others in Humberside and on Teesside); **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* at Filey; **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* at Spurn and over Ouse Washes.

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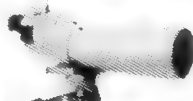
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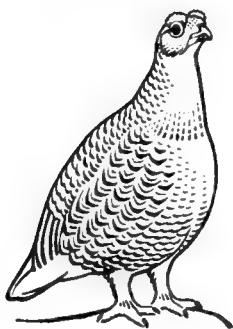
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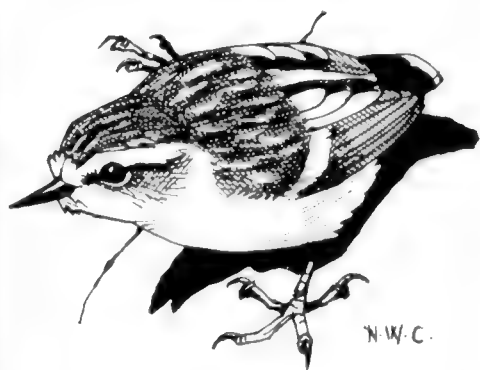
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British Birds

VOLUME 78 NUMBER 7 JULY 1985

What you think of 'BB'

In general, we seem to be producing a *British Birds* which is liked by its readers. Over 600 subscribers filled in the pull-out questionnaire in the centre of our March 1985 issue, and the results (table 1) will be taken fully into account in the coming year or so, as we plan future issues.

Table 1. Results of March 1985 survey of subscribers' likes and dislikes

Topic	Space occupied during 1983-84	RESULTS (%) OF SUBSCRIBERS' VOTES THAT THE SPACE DEVOTED TO THIS TOPIC IS CURRENTLY		
		Too much	About right	Too little
Main papers (behaviour, food, ecology, etc.)	15%	23	57	20
Notes and letters (behaviour, food, ecology, etc.)	13%	29	60	11
Main papers (identification)	11%	16	42	42
Annual report on 'Rare birds in Great Britain'	9%	10	76	14
'Recent reports'	8%	15	66	19
'News and comment'	6%	8	74	18
Notes and letters on identification points	5%	10	60	30
Papers and notes on rare bird occurrences	4%	13	58	29
Annual report on 'Rare breeding birds in the UK'	4%	10	73	17
'Mystery photographs'	4%	13	79	8
Main book reviews	4%	11	73	16
'European news'	2%	20	54	26
'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs'	2%	19	67	14
'PhotoSpot'	2%	15	65	20
Short book reviews	1%	11	72	17
'Studies of West Palearctic birds'	1%	4	52	44
'Bird Photograph of the Year'	1%	11	77	12
'Personalities' profiles	1%	33	54	13
'Product reports' and product surveys	1%	15	56	29
'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award'	1%	20	75	5
'Points of view'	1%	10	76	14
'Seventy-five years ago'	1%	31	62	7
'Requests'	1%	5	87	8
'Expeditions'	1%	23	60	17
'Diary dates'	< 1%	15	80	5
'Recent prosecutions'	< 1%	20	65	15
Cartoons	< 1%	22	68	10
Quizzes	< 1%	26	60	14

We have noted in particular that many subscribers would like to see more papers and notes on identification and rarities, ‘Studies of West Palearctic birds’, and articles on birdwatching products. The least popular feature is ‘Personalities’, but even that has two-thirds of readers wanting the same or more space allotted to it in future and only one-third wanting less. ‘Seventy-five years ago . . .’ is also relatively unpopular, even though it is usually a space-filler occupying a part of the page which would otherwise be blank. Nevertheless, we have noted readers’ views, and shall not be expanding either of those two features.

As well as the completed questionnaires, we received so many letters with suggestions and detailed comments that we could not answer them all. We are, nevertheless, most grateful to the writers concerned, and many of the ideas will be followed up. A surprising number of subscribers criticised the space used for advertising and promotion of special offers of books and recordings, suggesting that this should be cut and the saved space devoted to extra papers and notes. As we hope most readers are aware, the income from advertising and sales through British BirdShop enables us to keep the *BB* subscription price lower, and, in fact, allows us to have *extra* pages of articles and photographs.

Table 2. Membership among ‘British Birds’ subscribers of British and Irish ornithological societies

Society	SUBSCRIBERS WHO HAVE TAKEN ‘BB’ FOR			ALL SUBSCRIBERS
	1-3 years	4-6 years	over 7 years	
BOU	2%	4%	19%	11%
BTO	45%	55%	63%	56%
IWC	2%	3%	3%	3%
SOC	7%	12%	15%	12%
RSPB	86%	86%	82%	84%

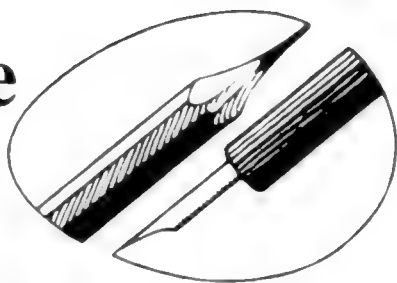
It was interesting to see the membership of ornithological societies, and to note how this changed from new to long-standing *BB* subscribers (table 2). Whereas only one in 50 of new ‘BB’ subscribers are also members of the BOU, one in five of long-established subscribers are members of Britain’s senior ornithological body: presumably a sign of maturing interest in ornithology (as perhaps also indicated by their stronger desire for more ‘European news’ compared with the probably younger and less-experienced new ‘BB’ subscribers). BTO membership shows a similar progression, with nearly two-thirds of our ‘old hands’ also being BTO members. RSPB membership is staggeringly high: it is good to know that so many ‘BB’ readers support Britain’s main bird conservation body.

Once again, we thank all those who sent us their opinions, on which the ‘BB’ of the future will be based. Eds.

Seventy-five years ago...

‘Of the birds there was no doubt, and in spite of my terribly bad ear for distinguishing closely allied bird-notes, I was at once able to pick out the song of the male from the chattering chorus of Reed- and Sedge-Warblers. I will at once confess to an honest doubt whether I should have done so without the knowledge that the Marsh-Warbler was there!’ (*Brit. Birds* 4: 37; July 1910)

'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award'



With more entries than last year, and a generally higher standard all round, we found this the most difficult competition to judge since the first in 1979. The winners were as follows:

BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1985

1st Ian Lewington (Didcot, Oxfordshire)

2nd Nicholas Pike (Grundisburgh, Suffolk)

3rd= K. H. E. Franklin (London)

3rd= Martin Hallam (Reading, Berkshire)

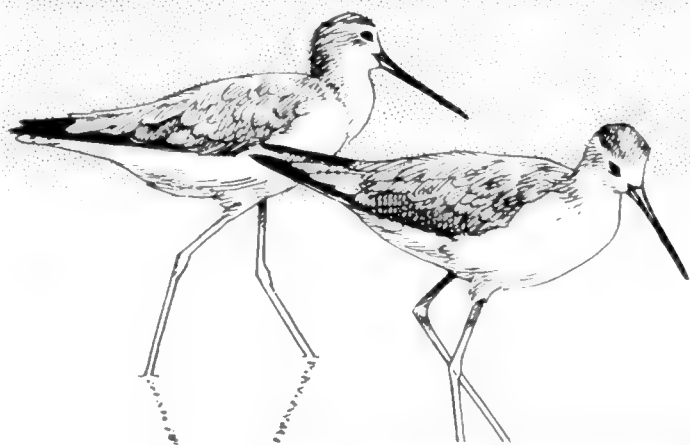
THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD, 1985

1st Ian Lewington (Didcot, Oxfordshire)



Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
(Ian Lewington)

There were many good sets of illustrations, and we should like to record the runners-up: Nik Borrow, R. A. Hume, H. A. Knott and Darren Rees. A further seven artists were short-listed: John Davis, W. Neill, D. R. Powell, Philip Snow, Miss T. K. Sykes, Guy Troughton and Frederick J. Watson. In the Richard Richardson Award, there were four runners-up: Malcolm



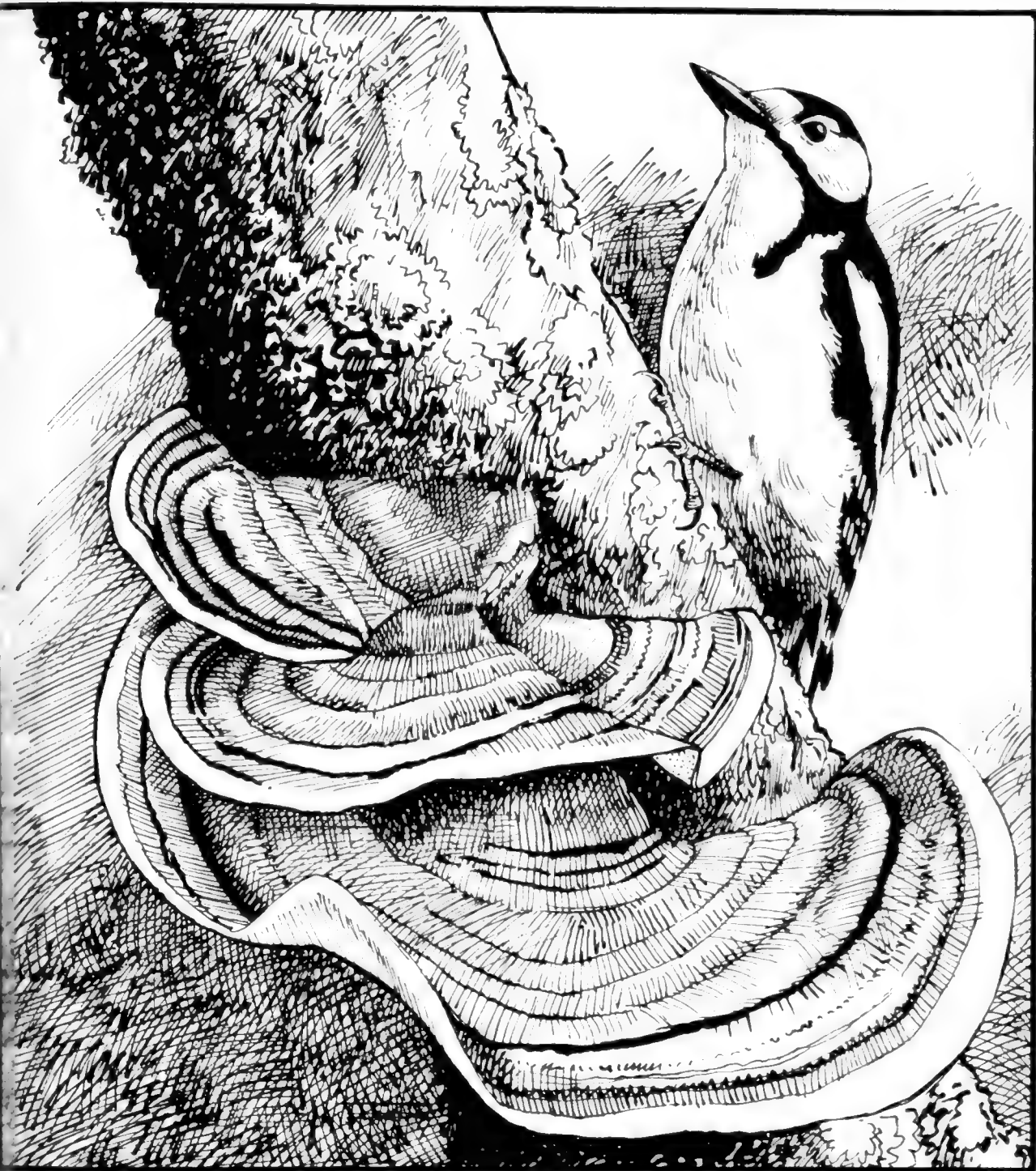
Marsh Sandpipers *Tringa stagnatilis* (Nicholas Pike)



Juvenile Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (Ian Lewington)

Ausden, A. J. Mackay, Ian Owens and Dave Showler.

Many of these, and others, submitted excellent individual drawings, but the competition is for a set of four, done to a precise set of measurements. We were pleased to find an increase in submissions for the Richard Richardson Award, although we still feel there must be many more artists under the age of 21 who could take part. There was no doubt as to the winner when Ian Lewington's quartet appeared. He has a superb technique, good sense of design, and his birds were well-observed and well-drawn. It was clear that his set of drawings would also be a close contender for the main award, and so it proved, with Ian eventually becoming the first person to win both awards in the same year. His cover design of a pair of



Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* (Nicholas Pike)

Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus* appears on the front of this month's issue and as the frontispiece to volume 78.

Nicholas Pike, placed second, submitted two small drawings, of Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* and Marsh Sandpipers *Tringa stagnatilis*, which were extremely simple but effective, and admirably captured the 'jizz' of the birds. His two cover designs were boldly conceived, unfussy, and would give no problems to the printer.

Tying for third place, K. Franklin and Martin Hallam produced sets of drawings with great merit, and, although not without faults, drawn with obvious understanding and knowledge of the birds. Franklin has a free and fresh use of the pen and an acute eye for bird character which appealed.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*
(Martin Hallam)

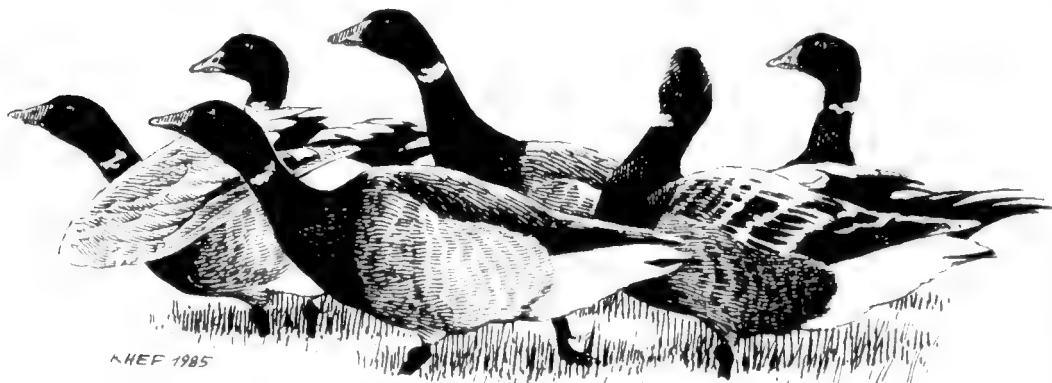


Little Gull *Larus minutus* (Martin Hallam)

Hallam's technique is more straightforward, but reveals an ornithologist's eye and a good sense of design, shown particularly in his white Barn Owl *Tyto alba* flying against the angled shape of a dark barn.

Artists had clearly taken note of our comments made in previous reports about presentation, and only one drawing was done at the wrong size. Technically, most were suitable for reproduction, but a few were over-detailed and would certainly have darkened in reduction. A black ballpoint pen is not a suitable medium for line-drawings, unless the artist is aware of the techniques required, and is looking for special effects or textures.

Scraperboard is very popular. One entrant who uses black scraperboard with considerable skill is D. E. Swithenbank, and his panel of feeding Bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, in well-observed postures, was very satisfactory. But black scraperboard is full of traps for the unwary, and is not recommended.

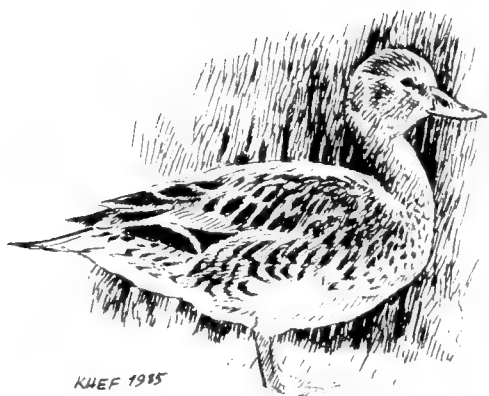


Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* (K. H. E. Franklin)

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* (Martin Hallam)

Comments made in previous reports about scale are still very relevant. Even the most experienced artists can find themselves drawing small birds which dwarf their immediate surroundings or background.

Many of the illustrations were based on personal observations by the artist which were recorded on the back of the drawing. It is usually clear when an artist has first-hand knowledge of the subject, and it is much better to draw a species which the artist knows well than to attempt a more 'exotic' species that is unfamiliar. We are looking for drawings suitable for reproduction in a book or a magazine such as *British Birds*, which means they must be technically adequate and ornithologically 'right'. That, however,



Female Pintail *Anas acuta* (K. H. E. Franklin)

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* in winter
(Nicholas Pike)



leaves enormous scope to the artist to draw in any way he chooses and, for the covers, there is the opportunity for a bold and imaginative approach. There could hardly be a greater contrast between designs for the cover than a carefully detailed drawing of an Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* by John M. Waters and a very simple, boldly textured drawing of Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* by A. Birkby. These are planned to appear on the September 1985 and June 1986 covers respectively. We find no difficulty in finding suitable cover designs for the coming year, and many other illustrations from the competition will be used inside the magazine.

All the entries by the winners will be exhibited throughout the 22nd Annual Exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at the Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1, during 4th-20th July 1985.

ROBERT GILLMOR, KEITH SHACKLETON and J. T. R. SHARROCK

Expeditions

Mark Beaman and Richard Porter

This is the fourth of these features on ornithological expeditions, the previous ones having been in April 1979, May 1981 and April 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 139-142; 74: 218-223 and 76: 182-185). Once again, leaders

of expeditions within the Western Palearctic or elsewhere in the world are invited to submit details of their plans so that we can announce forthcoming expeditions, or details of the results so that we can summarise their achievements*. We hope in this way to aid the development of ornithological investigations by fostering the interest of potential participants and also potential sponsors, whilst providing a showcase for valuable reports which too often circulate to only a few enthusiasts.

'What qualifies as an expedition?', we are frequently asked, 'And where is the borderline between that and a birdwatching trip?' Full-blooded surveys of little-visited regions lasting several months and with clear scientific objectives are clearly at one end of the spectrum, whereas a short birdwatching trip to a well-known region with the main aim being enjoyment is perhaps at the other. Many birdwatching trips do, however, provide useful ornithological information, especially where the findings can be collected and collated with other reports. Indeed, we would go so far as to say that some trips produce more valuable scientific results than do some so-called expeditions. In future, we plan to include news of the more-interesting birdwatching trips, but in general only where there is a report which can be made available (at a price if necessary) to others. We hope that those engaged in birdwatching trips will write up their results and let us have a copy. In recognition of this expanded coverage, 'Expeditions' is to be renamed 'Expeditions and trips'.

Alberta, Canada A report shortly to be printed describes the Royal Air Force Ornithological Society's expedition in May-June 1983 to the prairies of the South Saskatchewan River and to the Waterton Lakes National Park in the Rocky Mountains. It contains an annotated species list and illustrations, and will stimulate other birders to visit this rich area in the breeding season. For a copy contact Major David Counsell, 8 Darnley Drive, Southborough, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Belize The Army Birdwatching Society carried out an expedition, 'Exercise King Vulture', to Belize from 23rd February to 16th March 1982, led by Major Tim Hallchurch. A total of 306 species was recorded, one of which (Green-fronted Hummingbird *Amazilia viridifrons*) had not previously been reported in Belize. A total of 1,151 birds was netted, of 114 species; 859 of those that were migrants were ringed using rings provided by the US Department of the Interior Bird Banding Laboratory. The report, published in *Adjutant*, is available, price £2.00, from the Secretary of the ABWS, Ministry of Defence

Lands 3, Tolworth Tower, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 7DR.

Brunei A RAF Ornithological Society expedition was in Brunei throughout May and June 1984, camping both in the jungle and near the coast. The expedition carried out ringing studies at Lamunin, a jungle area previously studied by Kidd and Beales, in jungle at Labi, and in the remote Temburong district. They used helicopters to reach sites normally inaccessible to ornithologists, and reports are being compiled. Contact Major David Counsell for further information (for address see 'Alberta').

Cyprus The RAF Ornithological Society mounted an expedition to Cyprus from 1st to 29th April 1982 to carry out an ornithological survey, including ringing, on parts of the island with particular regard to spring migration. The main areas surveyed were in the south, including the whole of the Akrotiri Peninsula extending west to Episkopi and Paramali coastal areas and east towards the outskirts of Limassol. This encompasses a range of diverse habitats including sea cliffs, rocky scrub-covered slopes, freshwater pools,

*Pressure of his work with the RSPB has forced Richard Porter to relinquish co-authorship of this feature after this fourth contribution. His successor, joining Mark Beaman as joint compiler of 'Expeditions and trips', will be Nigel Redman.

Items for possible inclusion should be sent to either Mark Beaman, 8 Albert Road East, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 9AL, or Nigel Redman, 1 Westfields, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 3DZ.

gravel-pits, a reservoir, reedbeds, mixed agricultural land, saltflats and the Akrotiri Salt Lake itself. A comprehensive report has been produced, which, in addition to the systematic list and ringing details, contains notes on bird-shooting, the Akrotiri colony of Dead Sea Sparrows *Passer moabiticus*, the breeding of Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*, and the sighting of the first Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata* for the island. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of the expedition report should contact Major David Counsell (for address see 'Alberta').

Djibouti A two-man expedition visited Djibouti between 13th March and 4th April 1984 to carry out research into the little-known, endemic Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus*. Prior to this study, the population was thought to number only a few hundred, and, apart from seven specimens collected between 1952 (when it was first discovered) and 1970, almost nothing was known about the species. The francolin was found to be present in good numbers, possibly up to 5,000 individuals, but its only known habitat, the Forêt du Day National Park, is disappearing at an alarming rate due to a combination of overgrazing, timber removal and climatic change. So, despite this apparent rise in population, the continued survival of the species is far from assured. Besides work on the francolin, daily records of all bird and mammal species were kept and some evidence of raptor migration was noted. In total, 160 species of birds were recorded, many apparently new for the country. This project was endorsed by ICBP and supported by the World Pheasant Association and the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society. Full details of the observations are included in the expedition report, copies of which are available (price on request) from Geoff and Hilary Welch, c/o 28 Coleman Avenue, Hove, Sussex BN3 5NB.

Egypt From mid April to mid May 1983, a small expedition comprising M. C. Jennings, D. Parr, P. C. Heathcote and R. Frost, sponsored by the Holyland Conservation Fund, The US Fish & Wildlife Service and British Petroleum, visited the Red Sea province of Egypt to study resident and migratory birds. In addition, they carried out a survey of oil pollution in the area, including an assessment of its effect on bird communities. The coast was visited in many places between Suez and Marsa Alam, the adjacent Red Sea mountains were explored, and landings made on 24 separate islands at the mouth of

the Gulf of Suez. About 36 half degree squares were visited for the atlas of Egyptian breeding birds project. A total of 162 species was observed, including 11 breeding seabirds and shorebirds, and 49 breeding landbirds. A census was made of birds breeding on the islands, including Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*, Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, White-eyed *Larus hemprichi* and Sooty Gulls *L. leucophthalmus* and Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*. Migrating raptors and storks were counted. Oil pollution was a dominant feature of all coasts, the main centre being the Ras Gharib area. Most islands were heavily polluted, at least on their western and northern shores: pollution gradually decreased southwards towards Marsa Alam. Some pollution appeared to be from the 1982 major spill, but much evidence was collected of fresh contamination. Oiled birds were frequently encountered, especially on the islands, involving 35 different species. The influence of tar residues on intertidal flora and fauna was also studied. A full report is being prepared for publication. Separate papers on oil pollution and breeding seabirds are planned. Specialist reports will be made to the organisers of the Atlas of Egyptian Birds, the Holarctic Avian Speciation Atlas and the Site Register Schemes of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East. Anyone wishing to receive information of the publication of the results in due course should contact Michael Jennings, 10 Mill Lane, Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire.

Expedition Advisory Centre The EAC is jointly financed and administered by the Royal Geographical Society and the Young Explorers' Trust to provide an information and training service to those planning an expedition. In addition to seminars on planning small expeditions, there are specialist courses on catering and photography as well as on expeditions to mountain, forest, desert and polar regions. The EAC also publishes some very helpful booklets (for example, fund-raising for expeditions, including ways of approaching grant-giving organisations, insurance for expeditions, and a guide to writing expedition reports). Leaflets, a list of publications and training programmes are available from Mrs Shan Winsor, Expedition Advisory Centre, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR.

Gibraltar & Morocco The Army Bird-watching Society expedition 'Exercise Rock Thrush' visited Gibraltar and Morocco from 21st April to 10th May 1983. Over 400 birds

were ringed in Morocco using French ring-ing-scheme rings provided by the Institut Scientifique in Rabat. Areas visited included Merja Zerga, Larache marshes, the Rif mountains and Rastinga Smir. The report of this expedition is published in *Adjutant* and can be obtained, price £2.00 (for address see 'Belize').

Herm The RAF Ornithological Society conducted the first ornithological survey of the island of Herm, in the Channel Isles, in April and May 1984. A total of 93 species was identified, including a female Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*, and 130 birds were ringed. Contact Major David Counsell for further information (for address see 'Alberta').

ICBP Conservation Expedition Competition This competition has recently been established to promote conservation thinking and objectives among expedition groups. It is open to any ornithological teams planning work in a foreign country and the best two proposals will each receive £1,000 from ICBP as well as helpful backing. Projects which have the greatest chance of success are those identified by ICBP as being of highest conservation priority. Any expedition organisers wishing to learn more should write (ask for a copy of *Guide for the ICBP Conservation Expedition Competition*, price £2.00) to ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL.

Inaccessible Island, Tristan du Cunha

The Denstone College expedition to Inaccessible Island in the Tristan da Cunha group was partly orientated towards ornithology. The expedition visited this exceedingly remote island from October 1982 to February 1983. During this period, studies were made of the huge colonies of Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos* and Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. Enormous numbers of breeding Great Shearwaters were found to be present in the thick tussock grass and counts of occupied burrows in measured quadrats were carried out. (Tristan islanders reported that the numbers of this species seemed to have increased greatly within the island group in recent years.) A virtually complete census was made of the Yellow-nosed Albatross breeding population, and also of the much smaller breeding populations of Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca* and Wandering Albatross *D. exulans*. Studies were also made of the endemic landbirds, and over 3,000 birds of 16 species were ringed, including nearly 1,700 Yellow-nosed Albatrosses and nearly 1,100 Great Shearwaters. A summary of the ornithological

studies is given in the expedition report. Anyone interested in obtaining the report or further information should contact Michael Swales, Denstone College, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire ST14 5HN.

Japan As yet only a comparatively small number of foreign birdwatchers have visited Japan, a group of islands with a diverse and fascinating avifauna. Japan has a considerable number of endemic bird species as well as many winter or summer visitors of particular interest to Palearctic-orientated birdwatchers. Now that the islands are attracting much more interest overseas, a recently produced report by Rodney Martins on an extended birdwatching trip in March to May 1980 is especially welcome. The 50-page report consists of a detailed systematic list covering the observations of the author and some other observers, plus a very useful account of birdwatching localities of particular interest to overseas visitors. Copies of the report are available, price £1.00, from the author at 75 Stafford Street, Norwich NR2 3BG.

Kenya A joint ICBP/University of East Anglia expedition was undertaken in July and August 1983 to study the Arabuko-Sokoke forest on the coast of Kenya. No fewer than six species listed as rare in the International Bird Red Data Book occur in the forest, namely Sokoke Scops Owl *Otus irenae*, Clarke's Weaver *Ploceus golandi*, Sokoke Pipit *Anthus sokokensis*, Amani Sunbird *Anthreptes pallidigaster*, Spotted Ground Thrush *Turdus fischeri* and East Coast Akalat *Sheppardia gunningi*. The forest is considered to be the most important site for bird species conservation in Kenya. In addition to studying the population density, distribution and habitat requirements of each species, a survey was made of the human pressure, which included the results of discussions with forestry officials and others on forestry policies and practices: extensive logging in the past has severely modified much of the habitat. A 76-page report *The Conservation of the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, Kenya* (which includes a systematic list of all species recorded) by Martin Kelsey and Tom Langton is available, price £3.00 from ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge.

Ladakh, India The ornithological studies carried out by the members of Southampton University at Tikse, Ladakh (in the north-western Himalayas), during 1977-81 (see *Brit. Birds* 76: 184) were continued until July 1982. Spring migration was found to be rather different in composition from that

experienced in autumn, with some families, particularly warblers, found in smaller numbers, but others, particularly pipits and wagtails, much more abundant. Similar variations were noticed at species level. Amongst the more interesting species recorded were Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*, Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* and Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*. A preliminary report of the studies carried out in 1981-82 has been prepared, and a final report is in preparation. The final report of the studies carried out in 1980 has now been published. This comprehensive 204-page report represents a most valuable contribution to our knowledge of the ornithology of Ladakh and gives full details of the ringing programme and other observations carried out at Tikse from August to November 1980, as well as details of a study of the breeding birds of the Suru Valley in western Ladakh. The report is available, price £7.00 (£8.50 for overseas enquirers) from the University of Southampton Ladakh Expedition 1980, Department of Biology (Building 44), University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton SO5 9NH.

Morocco (1) Following the studies carried out in spring 1981 (see *Brit. Birds* 76: 183), the Netherlands Wader Expedition to Morocco observed the spring migration of waders at Sidi Moussa and Merja Zerga in March and April 1982. Counts were on average lower than in 1981, with maximum counts of over 4,500 waders of all species at Sidi Moussa on 30th March and over 20,000 at Merja Zerga on 18th March. Visible migration was more obvious than in 1981, and there was evidence to suggest that the migrant flocks travelled over the sea rather than following the shoreline. Over 900 waders were ringed and 30 controls were made. The preliminary results of the expedition have already appeared (*Wader Study Group Bulletin* 36: 12-14), but a more detailed report is in preparation. Anyone interested in further information should contact Theunis Piersma, Korte Nieuwstraat 4, 9724 LC Groningen, Netherlands.

Morocco (2) The University of London Natural History Society expedition to Morocco visited Cap Rhir north of Agadir during August 1983. Systematic seawatching revealed large numbers of Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea* moving north (over 21,000 in 17 days) and sizeable southward movements by several species of gulls

and terns. In total, 41 species of seabirds and waders were seen: the expedition report analyses the data collected and discusses the identification problems posed by 49 Lesser Crested/Crested Terns *Sterna bengalensis/bergii* and seven Royal Terns *S. maxima* observed by the expedition. Details of the birds seen in other areas in Morocco visited by the expedition are also included in the 64-page report available, price £2.50, from Paul Thompson, 37 Leicester Road, East Finchley, London N2.

Morocco (3) See 'Gibraltar & Morocco'.

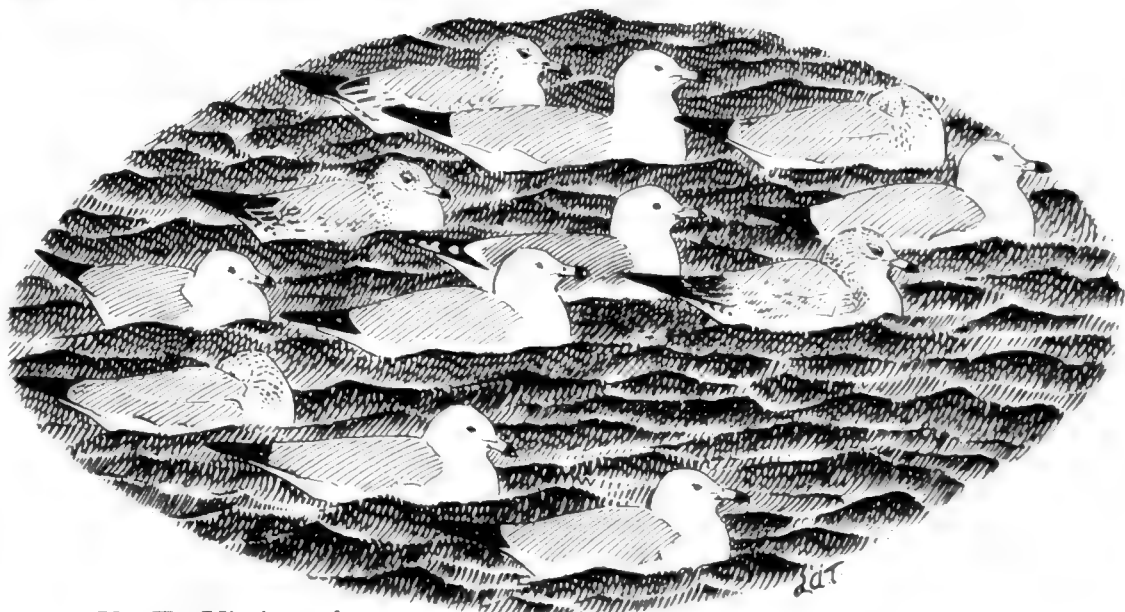
St Vincent Between June and August 1982, an ICBP-endorsed expedition from the University of East Anglia surveyed this Lesser Antillean island to determine the status of the endemic St Vincent Parrot *Amazona guildingii*. The survey revealed that the parrots' population had decreased by some 20% since 1978, to an estimated 421 individuals. Of the six areas where St Vincent Parrots were found in 1978, only four had parrots in 1982. It was concluded that the decline in the parrot population was primarily as a result of habitat destruction. Hurricane Allen has destroyed vital nesting trees in the windward forests in 1980, whilst both shifting and permanent agriculture were encroaching into remaining parrot habitat. One region which held parrots in 1978 had been converted to agriculture by 1982. Charcoal burning was also responsible for the loss of many suitable nesting trees. Contrary to expectations, the eruption of Mount Soufrière in 1979 was found to have caused little habitat damage to areas frequented by parrots, although it undoubtedly caused the asphyxiation of a number of individuals in peripheral areas. The pet trade still persisted: at least eight St Vincent Parrots were removed from their nests in 1982. The expedition has made a number of recommendations concerning the conservation of the St Vincent Parrot. These include the establishment of a parrot reserve in a specified area, and the enforcement and strengthening of laws related to the capture of parrots. These recommendations have been submitted to WWF and it is hoped that they will give financial assistance to the St Vincent government, which is keen to initiate a project to conserve this endangered bird. Information concerning this expedition can be obtained from F. R. Lambert, 15 Bramble Rise, Westdene, Brighton, or from ICBP. A full report of the expedition has been compiled and is obtainable, price £3.00, from ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge.

Western Isles The major RAF Ornithological Society expedition in 1985 will be a return in May and June to the uninhabited islands of Berneray and Mingulay in the Outer Hebrides (Western Isles). Projects will include surveying the seabird colonies, and ringing. The first RAFOS expedition to these two islands was in 1979, and this saw the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken there. The 120-page report contains a great deal of valuable information not only on birds, but also on other forms of wildlife studied (e.g. plants, mammals, insects, crustacea and molluscs). Nesting seabird censuses, especially of Fulmars *Fulmarus*

glacialis, Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*, Razorbills *Alca torda*, Guillemots *Uria aalge* and Puffins *Fratercula arctica*, showed in several cases good increases in numbers (perhaps due to better counting?) since the 'Operation Seafarer' work of 1969. Clearly, it is important that these counts are repeated in 1985, and the precise counting techniques used in 1979 will facilitate meaningful comparison. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of the 1979 report should contact Major David Counsell (for address, see 'Alberta'), who will also supply details of future RAFOS expeditions and reports of past ones.

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Ring-billed Gulls in Britain and Ireland



K. E. Vinicombe

On 14th March 1973, a then post-graduate geography student, Rob Hume, noticed a pale gull amongst a large flock of Common Gulls *Larus canus* resting on the beach at Blackpill, Swansea, West Glamorgan. To his eternal credit, he followed up the bird, took detailed notes, and identified it as Britain's first Ring-billed Gull *L. delawarensis*, an American species whose occurrence here had long been expected, but never proved

Table 1. Annual totals of Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* recorded in Britain and Ireland from 1973 to 1983

1973	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83
3	3	5	5	4	9	9	6	55	75	84

(Hume 1973). During the subsequent three years, a small group of Swansea students found more Ring-billed Gulls at Blackpill and by the end of 1975 a total of 11 individuals had been recorded (Vinicombe 1973, 1975). In 1976, the Blackpill monopoly was finally broken, and by the end of 1980 the British and Irish total had risen to 44 individuals from 11 counties, exactly half of these having been at Blackpill. Ireland recorded its first in 1979, with the first five coming from the Belmullet area, Co. Mayo. Subsequently, however, numbers in Britain and Ireland have increased dramatically: there were an astonishing 55 in 1981, 75 in 1982 and 84 in 1983 (table 1). What, therefore, has caused this sudden upsurge? Was there a genuine influx in 1981-83, or was the increase purely a result of greater observer-awareness of the species' identification features? If the influx was genuine, what caused it? What are the occurrence patterns? What of the future?

Annual fluctuations

There can be little doubt that Ring-billed Gulls were occurring here well before 1973, as evidenced by earlier ringing recoveries in the Azores in 1945 and in Spain in 1951 and 1965 (*BWP*), as well as a record of one in Germany in 1968 (*J. Orn.* 109: 438-440). The initial occurrences at Blackpill resulted in a wider understanding of the subtle field characters of the species, a process assisted by the coincidental appearance, in the March 1973 issue of *British Birds*, of a paper on its identification (Grant 1973). The sudden upsurge in 1981 was, however, quite remarkable, especially considering that only six had been recorded during 1980. Was the increase connected in any way with greater observer interest following the publication of a series of papers by P. J. Grant on the identification of gulls (Grant 1978-81), followed by their eventual publication in book form (Grant 1982)? To answer this question and to explain the recent increase, it is necessary to analyse the age structure of the records.

In any gull which takes three years to mature, the majority of individuals will be adult, followed by a smaller proportion of first-years and a small minority of second-years. This pattern may not, of course, hold true for vagrants, as most will probably be inexperienced first-years that are more susceptible to wandering off-course. If, however, the Ring-billed Gulls which arrive in Europe stay here, then a more normal age structure would be expected. A complication does arise from the fact that first-years tend to be less readily identified than adults and second-years. Table 2 shows an analysis of the age structure of the original 44 individuals, plus a breakdown for the three peak years, 1981, 1982 and 1983. The original records reveal a predictable pattern, bearing in mind that, in the early years, first-years were probably overlooked more than they are now. If the 1981 influx was genuine, then it would be logical to assume that the majority of new arrivals



151. Second-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Co. Cork, March 1982 (Richard T. Mills)

Table 2. Age-structure of Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* recorded in Britain and Ireland in 1973-80 and the three peak years, 1981, 1982 and 1983

The 1981 Northern Ireland records referred to as 'second-summer' in *Brit. Birds* (75: 508) were, in fact, first-summer (P. Vizard *in litt.*)

Years	First-year	Second-year	Adult
1973-80	29.5%	29.5%	41%
1981	65%	22%	13%
1982	21%	44%	35%
1983	18%	16%	66%

would have been inexperienced first-years, and that, if these remained on this side of the Atlantic and did not return home, there would have been a preponderance of second-years in 1982 and a preponderance of adults in 1983. This is exactly what table 2 reveals: 65% of Ring-billed Gulls in 1981 were first-year, 44% in 1982 were second-year, and 66% in 1983 were adult.

Table 3 shows the number of first-years recorded from 1973 to 1983; these totals should reflect the numbers of Ring-billed Gulls newly arriving in Europe. Although 1981 stands out as an influx year, good numbers

Table 3. Numbers of first-year Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* recorded in Britain and Ireland from 1973 to 1983, reflecting the numbers of new arrivals occurring in Europe

1973	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83
1	0	1	0	1	3	3	4	36	16	15

continued to be recorded subsequently, but it must be assumed that this was partially due to the fact that observers had ‘got their eye in’ during the 1981 influx and had, in some areas, taken more interest in their local gull populations.

Causes of the 1981 influx

Having established that the 1981 influx was genuine, I have consulted the ‘Changing seasons’ reports in the journal *American Birds* to try to ascertain its causes. These accounts refer consistently to recent large increases in the Ring-billed Gull populations, and there are repeated references to increased colony sizes, consolidation and spread into new areas (e.g. *Amer. Birds* 35: 918, 921, 940, 942; 37: 968, 970). So great has been the population explosion that five new colonies discovered in Ontario in 1983 included some 1,500 nests on an active rubbish dump, none of which, needless to say, was successful (*Amer. Birds* 37: 984). Against this background, a *gradual* increase in Ring-billed Gull numbers on this side of the Atlantic would perhaps have been expected, but the sudden influx in 1981 appears to have been due almost entirely to the weather.

152. Adult winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* moulting to adult summer. USA, February 1980 (*J. B. & S. Bottomley*)



Ring-billed Gulls from the Great Lakes and northeast Canadian population winter mainly down the American eastern seaboard. Under 1% remains in the northeastern United States, but 40-45% winter between the Carolinas and Florida, falling to about 12% in Texas (*BWP*). The winter of 1980-81 was bitterly cold in eastern North America. The cold weather arrived in December 1980 and remained throughout January 1981. In Ontario, one locality measured a record 231 cm of snow in December alone, while at Toronto Airport an all-time low of -31.3°C was recorded in January (*Amer. Birds* 35: 295). Farther south, the Hudson-Delaware region recorded exceptionally low precipitation and low temperatures and, on the coast, saltwater bays and estuaries were largely frozen by New Year's Day, forcing many birds to move to the ocean or farther south (*Amer. Birds* 35: 282), resulting in an unprecedented scarcity of many waterbirds. Even in Florida, temperatures reached freezing or below on 35 occasions and, on the night of 12th/13th January, the weather station at Tallahassee noted its second-lowest temperature on record: -13°C (*Amer. Birds* 35: 293). The effect of this weather on Ring-billed Gulls is not well documented, although larger numbers than usual were reported inland in parts of North Carolina, while 'thousands' were seen on a new refuse dump near Tallahassee (*Amer. Birds* 35: 291, 294). There can be little doubt that this severe weather, affecting as it did the main wintering areas in the southeastern USA, resulted in a dispersal which led to the European invasion.

The following winter, 1981/82, was also extremely cold, although it failed to produce such a large influx. Unlike the previous year, the cold did not generally set in until January, and many areas reported relatively mild spells in December and February (*Amer. Birds* 36: 261-262). It seems, therefore, that, despite severe cold in mid winter, the less protracted nature of the cold failed to provoke a more widespread transatlantic exodus. In total contrast, the winter of 1982/83 was exceptionally mild, with good numbers of Ring-billed Gulls lingering in many northern and inland areas (*Amer. Birds* 37: 279, 280, 292, 304).

Occurrence patterns

The early Blackpill records soon established a regular pattern of occurrence: (1) wintering adults from about late November to late March; (2) additional 'passage' adults in late March and April; (3) 'passage' second-years in April and May; and (4) summering first-years in June and July. Fig. 1 illustrates the occurrence patterns for Britain and Ireland, split into the three age groups; but to understand fully what is happening it is advisable to concentrate initially on fig. 2, which splits the arrival dates of first-years occurring in Cornwall and Dorset for the years 1981-83. Projecting as it does into the Atlantic, Cornwall is in a prime position to receive newly arrived Nearctic vagrants. The arrival dates in Cornwall fit neatly into three groups. First, there is an October record which was no doubt an inexperienced first-year bird that became caught up in a rapidly moving depression and swept across the Atlantic during the optimum migration period. The main arrival, however, was in the winter months, from December to the beginning of February, and it seems that some of these

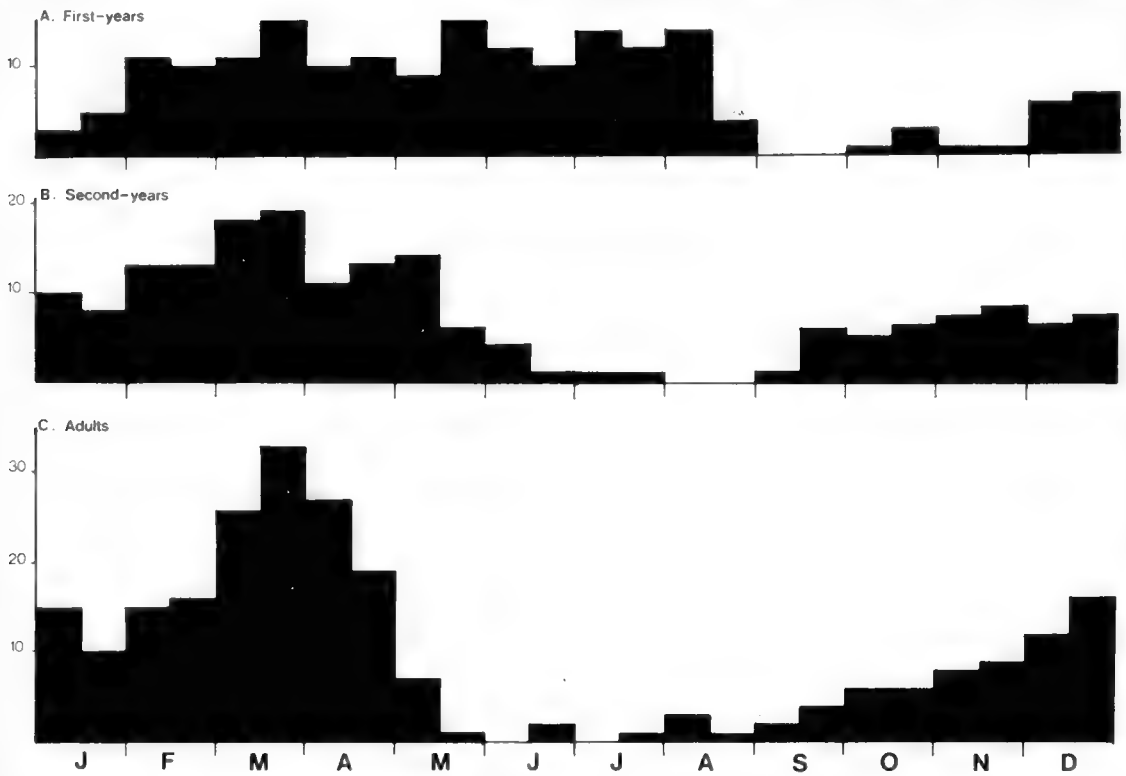


Fig. 1. Presence of first-year, second-year and adult Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* in Britain and Ireland, 1973-83. (The cut-off date between first-summer and second-winter has been taken as 1st September)

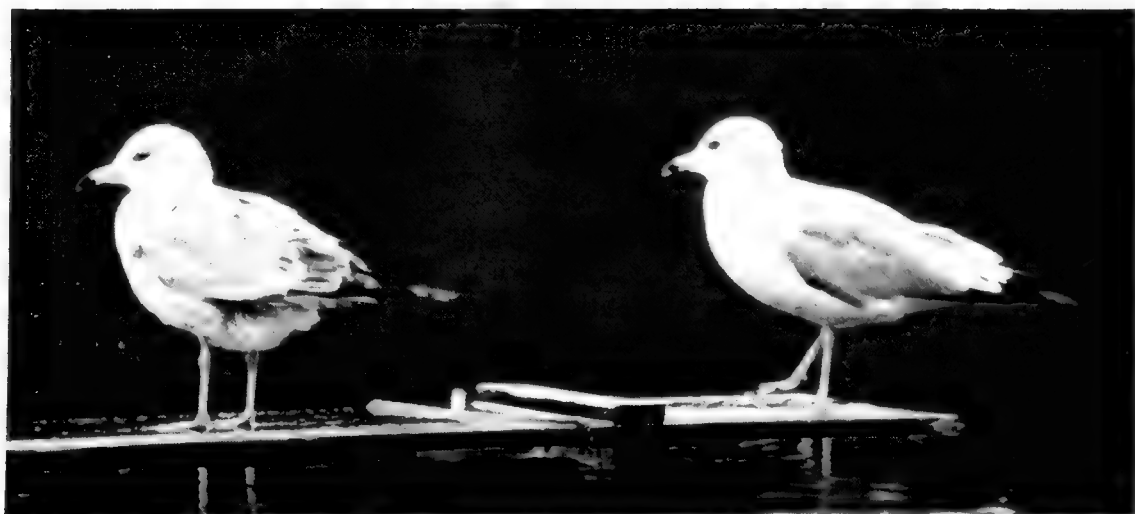
arrived in Cornwall as cold-weather refugees from North America. The third crop of records occurred in spring, from mid March until May; both areas recorded a spring influx although it was particularly marked in Dorset, which, being farther east, produced only one midwinter individual in that particular three-year period.

In North America, the spring migration of adult Ring-billed Gulls lasts from late February to early April, with colonies reoccupied from late March to early May (*BWP*). The pronounced late-March peak for all age groups (fig. 1) would, therefore, tie in with the timing of their normal migrations. There are two possible explanations for the spring peak in Britain and Ireland: it could be the result of a transatlantic crossing at that time, or it may result from a passage of birds that have wintered farther west or south. There is strong evidence that at least some American gulls that turn up in the English southwest peninsula move east up the English Channel in spring. In particular, a first-winter Bonaparte's Gull *L. philadelphia* at Penzance, Cornwall, in March 1981 and a first-winter Franklin's Gull *L. pipixcan* at Plymouth, Devon, from January to March 1982, both turned up subsequently in Weymouth, Dorset (*Brit. Birds* 75: 506 and 76: 499). In view of this, it seems likely that some of the Weymouth Ring-billed Gulls had wintered in Devon and Cornwall. This suggestion may, however, be an over-simplification, as other areas also recorded a small spring passage. It seems highly unlikely that the spring peak relates to birds that have newly arrived in Europe following a spring Atlantic crossing, as 78% of those recorded in late March were experienced adult and second-year birds which would not be so likely to make errors of navigation on such a large scale. It must be remembered that the main wintering range of the Ring-

billed Gull in the USA lies at a latitude equivalent to that of Spain and northwest Africa and it seems probable that many Ring-billed Gulls which cross the Atlantic hit Europe at a more southerly latitude; the records from Spain, the Azores, and more recent ones from Morocco (O'Sullivan 1984), France (*Brit. Birds* 75: 571) and the Azores, where there were as many as 50 in 1980 (G. Le Grand *in litt.* to P. J. Grant), must surely confirm this suggestion. It seems, therefore, that the spring peak partially related to individuals which have wintered farther south, subsequently following their northerly migration instinct and heading up the west European coast. The adults and second-years may well have established a regular north-south migration route on this side of the Atlantic. It should be mentioned, however, that this spring peak may be emphasised by the fact that increased spring day-length will allow gulls more time to loaf around in non-feeding flocks and, therefore, facilitate easier detection. Similarly, longer spring evenings and finer weather may provoke greater observer-activity. Concentrated daily observations at intensively watched localities, such as Radipole Lake (Dorset) and Blackpill, firmly indicate, however, that the spring passage is real and not merely a result of increased observation. Indeed, M. Cade (*in litt.*) has suggested that the spring peak may even be to some extent *under* emphasised, since short-staying migrants may easily be missed. The departure of adults following the spring peak is abrupt, with very few recorded after the beginning of May (fig. 1c). Records of adults in mid summer are decidedly unusual. Second-years follow the same pattern, but their spring departure is inevitably rather more leisurely. There is a gradual reappearance of adults in late summer and early autumn, an occurrence pattern which is consistent with their return from northern areas with the Common Gull flocks. Numbers then level off in mid winter.

In America, some first-years remain south during the summer (*BLP*), and this is a phenomenon clearly reflected in the British and Irish records. The spring influx of first-years is a protracted affair, with individuals appearing from late March right through to early June, with a peak in late May. They often spend the summer loafing aimlessly amongst residual flocks of Common and Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*, but records at this

153. First-winter (left) and second-winter Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis*, Co. Cork, March 1982 (*Richard T. Mills*)



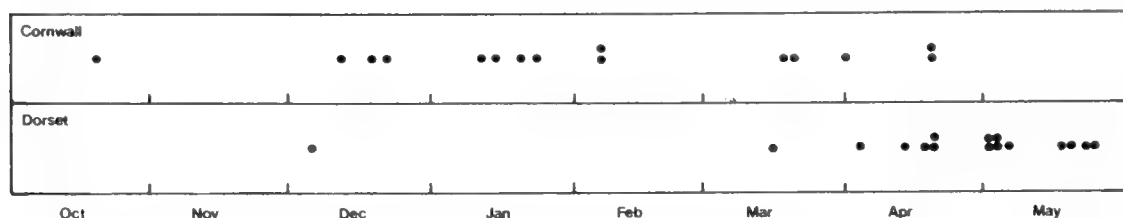


Fig. 2. Arrival dates of first-year Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* in Cornwall and Dorset, 1981-83. (A few May records in Dorset could relate to earlier individuals reappearing)

time of year may be exaggerated to some extent because they will be easier to locate. Records decrease markedly in mid August, when there appears to be a dispersal.

It is interesting to note that the occurrence-patterns of Ring-billed Gulls are remarkably similar to those of the Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus* (Hume 1976). In particular, the similar pattern of spring occurrences of first-years may further confirm that both species move north after wintering in southwestern Europe.

Geographical distribution

Fig. 3 clearly illustrates that most Ring-billed Gulls occur in southwest England, south Wales and Ireland: a pattern of occurrence to be expected of a transatlantic visitor. Notable, however, is the almost total lack of records in eastern and southeastern England, particularly the well-watched coastal counties from Lincolnshire to Sussex. The main areas of occurrence are based upon the centres of human population, which not only attract good numbers of gulls, but also produce suitably keen observers to check through them: Weymouth, Plymouth, Penzance, Swansea, Cork, Dublin and Belfast.

Allowing for the fact that a lot of Ring-billed Gull records relate to northward-moving birds in spring, it does seem odd that they are not more widely recorded at that time, particularly since there is a large-scale passage of Common Gulls through southeast England, thought mainly to involve Danish birds that have wintered on the west coast of France (Vernon 1969). Observers in eastern and southeastern England have been on the lookout for them, so maybe the bulk of returning Common Gulls with which they associate overfly these areas. This latter suggestion is borne out by radar evidence, which suggests that flocks migrate to the Continent in one continuous flight, usually too high for visual detection (Bourne & Patterson 1962). It does seem possible, however, that Ring-billed Gulls follow their American migration instincts and keep on a more direct south-north route, tagging on to British Common Gulls which head north through western Britain and the Irish Sea. L. A. Tucker and M. Cade (*in litt.*) have, however, suggested that the association between Ring-billed and Common Gulls may have been overemphasised. Ring-billed Gulls appear to be rather more versatile in their feeding habits than Common Gulls, and MC has noted that a number of the Weymouth birds have consistently fed around the town, rather than joining the daily exodus of field-feeding Common Gulls to the adjacent Dorset countryside. Dr M. A. Ogilvie (*in litt.*) also noted that the second-winter Ring-billed Gull at Slimbridge,

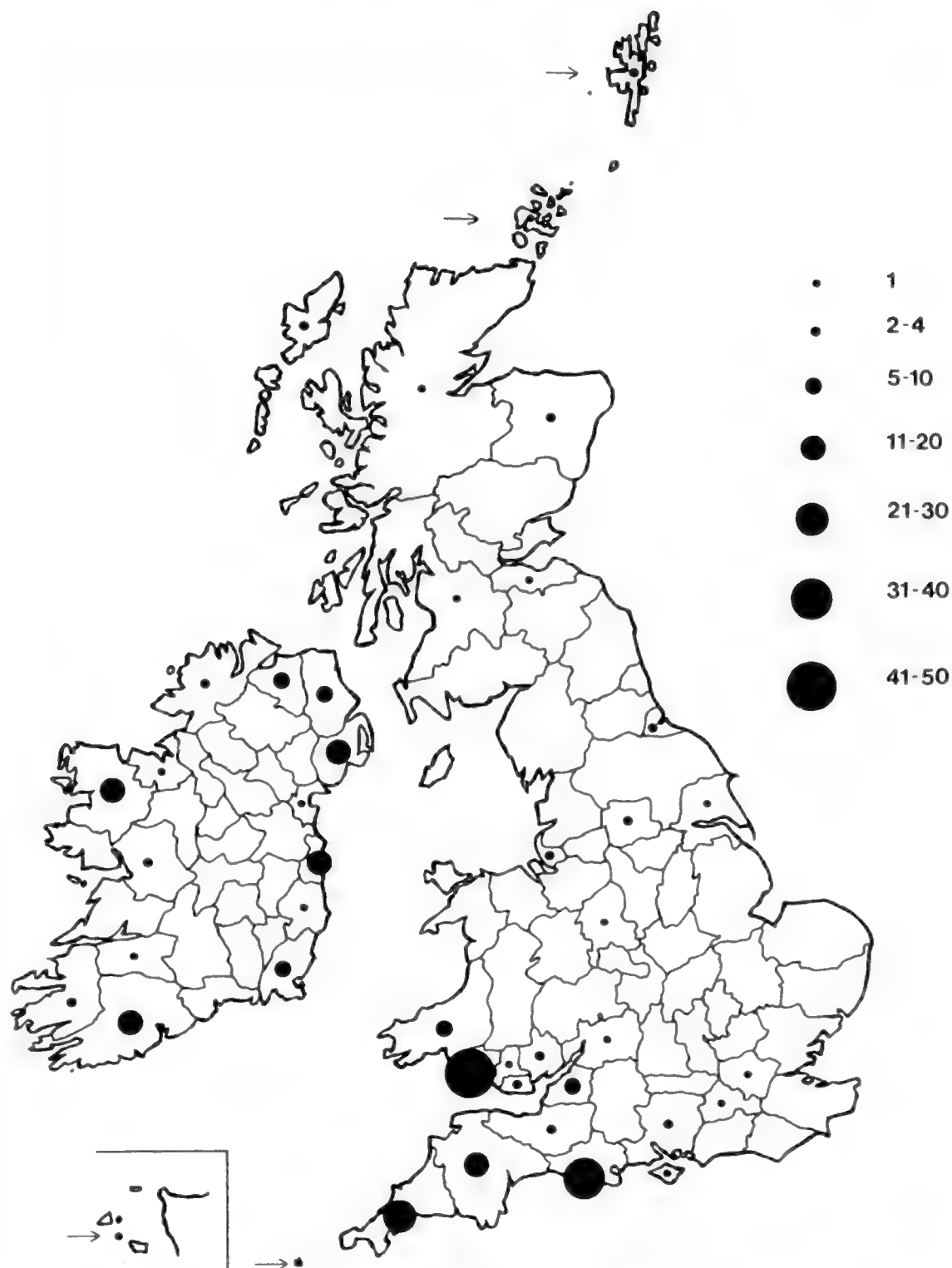
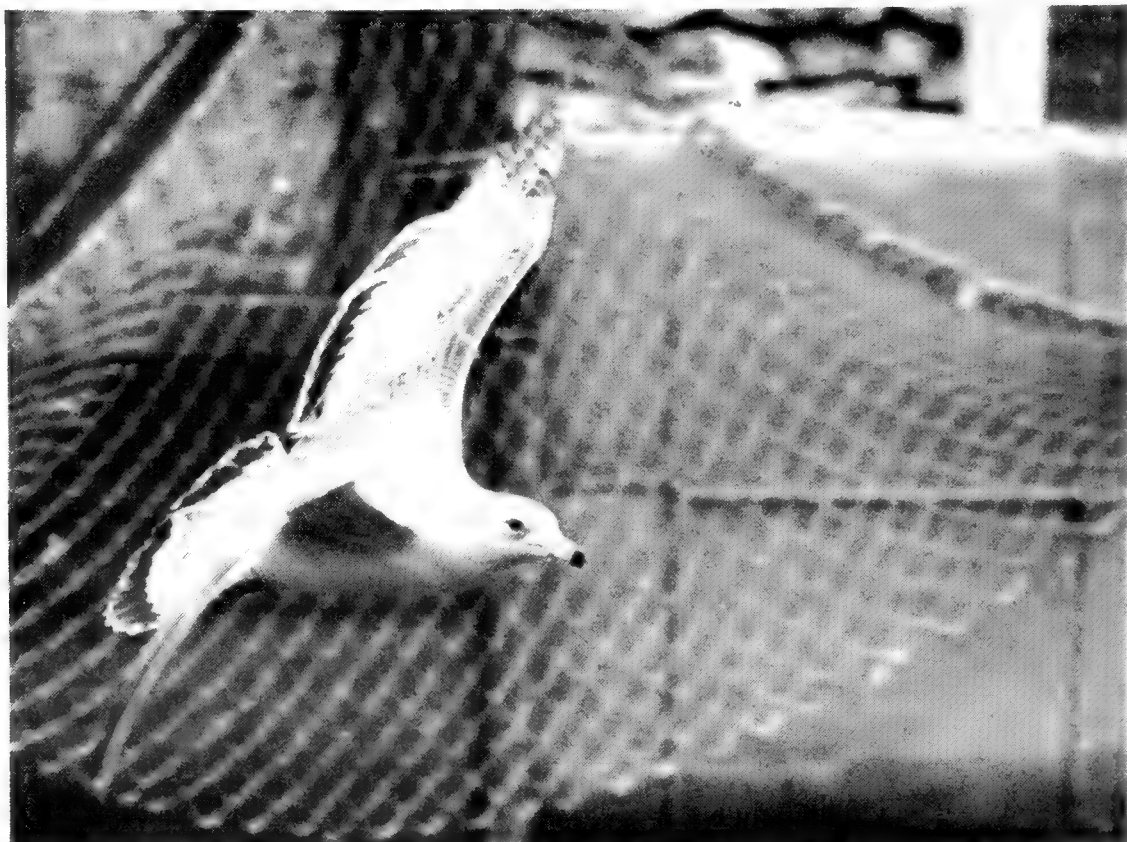


Fig. 3. Distribution by counties of Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* in Britain and Ireland during 1973-83

Gloucestershire, in January 1982 fed with a few hundred Black-headed Gulls and not with the approximately 50,000 Common Gulls on the nearby Cotswold pastures. It could well be that Ring-billed Gulls are also rather more independent on migration than is generally supposed.

Relative abundance

At Blackpill in the mid 1970s, wintering adult Ring-billed Gulls were occurring in Common Gull flocks at a rate of one or two in about 2,000-



154. First-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* moulting to first-summer, U.S.A. March 1981 (Jørgen Palmgren)

3,000. At the Weymouth roost, the corresponding winter figure is about one per 5,000 (M. Cade *in litt.*). Inland, this figure appears to drop considerably. At Chew Valley Lake, Avon, only one or two adults have been found wintering amongst a roost of up to 13,000 Common Gulls that feed mainly on upland pasture on the Mendips (Avon/Somerset) and Salisbury Plain (Wiltshire).

What of the future?

With a population explosion in North America and ever-increasing gull-awareness by British and Irish birdwatchers, there can be little doubt that the Ring-billed Gull will never return to its former extreme rarity status. It does seem, however, that the 1981 influx was exceptional, and that the high totals in the following two years resulted to a large extent from birds left over from that influx. Periodic influxes of this nature will no doubt recur, but it seems likely that, in the immediate future, Ring-billed Gull numbers will stabilise at a slightly lower level than at present. The current high numbers must inevitably increase the probability of future breeding in Europe, and spring adults have already been seen displaying at Blackpill (Davies *et al.* 1984, and personal observation) and at Radipole (M. Cade *in litt.*). Observers in northern areas would, therefore, be well advised to scrutinise Common Gull colonies during the summer. If the Black-headed Gull can colonise Canada, there would seem to be no reason why the Ring-billed Gull should not follow that initiative on the opposite side of the Atlantic.

Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to Martin Cade for his useful comments on the first draft; to Sheila Cobban for her help in finding some of the references; to Pat Vizard for clarifying some of the Northern Ireland information; to P. J. Grant, and to Laurel Tucker for help with the first draft.

Summary

The first Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* to be recorded in Britain and Ireland was in 1973. Between then and 1980, 44 individuals were recorded. In 1981 there was a major influx of at least 55 individuals, followed by 75 in 1982 and 84 in 1983. The 1981 influx occurred against a background of substantial population increase in North America, but the invasion was thought likely to have been provoked by severe freezing weather on the North American eastern seaboard. The large numbers in the two subsequent years are thought to have mainly involved birds left over from the 1981 influx since the majority in 1981 were first-years, while in 1982 the largest proportion were second-years, and in 1983 most were adults.

The occurrence-patterns of Ring-billed Gulls are analysed. The main arrival of first-years is apparently in mid winter, but a pronounced spring passage of all ages probably involves mainly individuals which have wintered farther south. Adults and second-years subsequently disappear in mid summer, and it seems that they must head north with Common Gulls *L. canus*. First-summer Ring-billed Gulls often spend the summer around British and Irish coasts. The vast majority of Ring-billed Gulls have been recorded in southwest England, south Wales and Ireland, mostly around centres of human population. Very few have been recorded in the rest of Britain, with none on the east and southeast coasts from Lincolnshire to Sussex. Ring-billed Gull numbers will probably eventually stabilise at a lower level than at present, but it seems likely that they may breed on this side of the Atlantic.

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European news

Records have been supplied by correspondents in 23 countries for this, the seventeenth, six-monthly report on interesting occurrences and status changes in Europe. We are pleased to welcome information for the first time from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. This feature is intended as a news service; anyone requiring further information or quoting records

in other publications should refer to the literature of the relevant country. Records awaiting formal verification by national rarity committees are indicated by an asterisk(*).

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single individuals

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* GREECE First record: dead on Evros Delta on 5th August 1983.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* SWEDEN Highest-ever annual total: 22 in 1983 (peaks of 15 in May and four in October), previous grand total about 190.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* BELGIUM First summering: single near Antwerp from late May to late July 1984*.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* SPAIN Large winter concentration discovered: at one locality on Formentera in Balearics, 3,900 on 6th December 1981 and 2,950 on 10th January 1984.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys* SPAIN Second record: Vivero in Lugo on 6th-7th August 1984*.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* SPAIN First records for Peninsular Spain: Torremolinos in Málaga on 7th February 1980, Vigo in Pontevedra on 1st June 1983, and flock of 14 at Blanes in Gerona on 29th April 1984*.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* DENMARK Fifth record: Røring in North Zealand on 6th November 1981. FAEROE ISLANDS Second record: Akraberg on 13th May 1984*. SWEDEN First record: Varberg in Halland on 31st August 1984*.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis* SWEDEN Fifth to seventh records: 19th October 1983, 29th July 1984* and 28th August 1984*.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* DENMARK High daily total: 120 at Blåvand in West Jutland on 7th October 1984. ITALY Fourth record: dead at sea off Capo Murro di Porco, Siracusa, in Sicily in March 1982*.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* SPAIN First record for Peninsular Spain: Málaga Bay on 2nd November 1981*.

Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* SWITZERLAND Second record: adult male at Basel on 9th February 1984.

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* NETHERLANDS First record: fresh tideline corpse near Egmond in Noord-Holland on 27th January 1985*.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* ESTONIAN SSR First breeding: five nests, three with eggs (2, 1 & 1), on small islet in Väinameri (Moon-

sund) in early July 1984, but no young reared*. LUXEMBOURG Increasingly common on migration (especially in Moselle Valley): 21st March to 22nd May 1984 (maximum 42 on 12th April) and 20th September to 23rd October (maximum 250 on 21st October). (Cf. increased breeding numbers in Denmark and the Netherlands. *Brit. Birds* 77: 233, 586.)

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* ITALY First breeding: two nests at Punta Alberete, Ravenna, in Romagna on 4th June 1981. YUGOSLAVIA Fifth record for Slovenia: Ptuj and Ormož during 31st December 1981 to 15th April 1982, with largest-ever flock of 37 on 1st January 1982 (previous records in 1841, 1854, 1908 and 1922).

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* LATVIAN SSR Fourth or fifth record: May 1984 (one in 1983, *Brit. Birds* 76: 567, dismissed as an escape).

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* FINLAND Fourth record: juvenile in Virrat on 13th October 1984 (transported to Spain by aeroplane).

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* DENMARK Tenth record: Skagen in North Jutland during 24th-27th May 1981. ITALY Breeding census: in 1981, about 17,350 pairs, mainly in Po valley (cf. 7,000-10,000 pairs in 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 275).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* ITALY Breeding census: in 1981, about 270 pairs, mainly in Po valley (cf. 400-500 pairs in 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 275). SWEDEN Fifth record: Varberg in Halland on 11th November 1983.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* GREECE First record: Porto Lagos on 17th August 1982 (second, not first, was on 20th August 1983; *Brit. Birds* 77: 233) (cf. spate of recent records in Austria, France and the Federal Republic of Germany, *Brit. Birds* 77: 233, 586).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* FRANCE Very high mortality during severe winter of 1984/85, especially in Camargue, southern France, and on Atlantic coast. ITALY Breeding census: in 1981, about 6,650 pairs, mainly in Po valley (cf. 3,500-4,000 pairs in 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 275).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* ITALY Breeding

census: in 1981, about 680 pairs, of which 650 in northwest (Piedmont and Lombardy) (cf. 400-500 pairs in 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 276).

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* BELGIUM Second breeding record: two pairs in Flanders in 1984 (first was in 1943). ITALY Breeding census: in 1981, about 480 pairs (cf. 1,645-2,165 pairs in 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 276).

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* SWEDEN Highest recent annual total: 37 in 1983.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* AUSTRIA Pair released from captivity bred successfully at Hohenems in Vorarlberg (reintroduction, after extinction around 1900). SPAIN Decrease: Spanish National Census (1979-81) revealed minimum of 5,776 pairs, 21% less than in 1974 census and 55% less than in 1957 census.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* SWEDEN Third and fourth 20th-Century records: three at Skälderviken in Scania on 19th May 1983, and one at Hjälstoviken in Uppland during 6th-9th October 1984.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* FRANCE About 4,500 killed in severe winter of 1984/85 in Camargue and the Midi. LATVIAN SSR Third record: spring 1984. MALTA Unusual influx: flocks of 20 and four on 9th December 1984 and 21st December 1984. SPAIN Best breeding season ever: with good water levels in 1984, 3,500-3,800 fledged in Guadalquivir Marismas and perhaps 5,000 more in now-protected lagoon of Fuente de Piedra.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* MALTA Unusual influx: 12 on 8th, three on 9th, five on 13th and one on 15th December 1984 (previously only seven documented records).

Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus* BULGARIA Second record: Durankulak in Tolbuchin on 15th January 1985.

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis* LUXEMBOURG Overwintering flock of about 100 near French border, apparently regular for at least past 30 years, but, until now, overlooked by birdwatchers.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* SPAIN Highest-ever wintering number: 120,000 in Guadalquivir Marismas in aerial survey in December 1983.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* ITALY First and second records: five in Venetia during December 1978 to February 1979, and six near Parma in Emilia on 9th-10th January 1980. LATVIAN SSR First record: flock of five in August 1984.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* ESTONIAN SSR Breeding in 1984: two sites, nest with four eggs at SE-Saaremaa and two young from two eggs and five young from five eggs reared in Väinameri* (cf. breeding in 1981-83, *Brit. Birds* 75: 569; 76: 273, 567; 77: 234).

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* DENMARK Strong spring passage: 12,000 at Kolding in East Jutland on 1st June 1984 (cf. Finland, *Brit. Birds* 77: 587). FRANCE First record of *B. b. nigricans*: Ile de Ré in Charente-Maritime from 12th January 1985*. SWEDEN First and second records of *B. b. nigricans*: adults at Ottenby in Öland on 4th October 1983 and at Ljunghusen in Scania during 29th October to 1st November 1984. (Cf. paper on European records of *B. b. nigricans*, *Brit. Birds* 77: 458-465).

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* POLAND Correction: record noted *Brit. Birds* 77: 587 was first post-war record (earlier three, in 1907, 1911 and 1935).

Garganey *Anas querquedula* LUXEMBOURG First breeding since 1950s: female with three young in May 1984.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* DENMARK Second record: adult male at Borreby Mose in Zealand during 5th-16th May 1981 (first was in 1886).

Redhead *Aythya americana* SWEDEN Only European record now rejected: after review, record of 11th-19th October 1984 is now rejected.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* FAEROE ISLANDS First record: Vági during 20th-27th September 1984*.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* SWEDEN Highest-ever annual total: 51 in 1983 (including only three females, and second-ever inland record).

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* BELGIUM Second record: male near Nieuwpoort on 17th-18th June 1984* (first was in December 1983, *Brit. Birds* 77: 587).

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* FAEROE ISLANDS Third record: adult male shot at Sundalagro in May 1979*.

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca* YUGOSLAVIA Third record for Slovenia in last 30 years: three at Ptuj on 21st December 1983 (previous records in 1955 and 1979).

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* NETHERLANDS Seventh record (first since 1965): Amsterdam on 24th February 1985*. SPAIN Continued increase: 99 in Cordoba on 17th October 1984.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* FAEROE ISLANDS Third record: Fugloy on 11th July 1984*.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* AUSTRIA Pair bred successfully on River Salzach in Upper Austria, where never recorded before. LUXEMBOURG Breeding peak: seven confirmed breeding pairs in 1984 (previous maximum two or three). (Cf. breeding in Belgium since 1976, *Brit. Birds* 73: 257; 75: 570.)

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* DENMARK Highest-ever daily count: 26 on migration at Sterns in Zealand on 29th September 1984.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* CZECHOSLOVAKIA First nesting for over 20 years: unsuccessful (two unfertilised eggs laid) in Trěboň pond basin in Bohemia in 1984 (perhaps originating from introduced population in Federal Republic of Germany, where seven young reared in 1978-84, which winters in Trěboň basin). NORWAY Increased breeding population: now minimum of 800 pairs, many previously overlooked, but big increase in South (e.g. in Møre & Romsdal 22 pairs in 1974 increased to 40 pairs in 1983) (cf. increasing in Finland and as winterer in France and Greece, *Brit. Birds* 74: 260; 75: 570; 77: 587).

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* NORWAY Second record: Oppland in September 1984 (first was in July 1982, *Brit. Birds* 77: 587). SPAIN Breeding population of Menorca in the Balearics seems to be sedentary: 140 estimated to overwinter there, and up to 92 in single roost on 6th March 1984.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* AUSTRIA Pair from freeflying population at Salzburg zoo nested 15 km away at Untersberg, and reared one young.

Short-toed Eagle *Circus gallicus* FINLAND Third record: Joutseno on 21st April 1984 (first two were in October 1979 and August 1980, *Brit. Birds* 73: 258; 74: 260).

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* LUXEMBOURG Second and third records: April 1983 and at same locality on 16th April 1984.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* SWITZERLAND Seventh record: Fanel in Bern on 8th April 1984 (most-recent West European records of which we have note were in France in July 1979 and July 1980, *Brit. Birds* 74: 261).

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* NETHERLANDS About tenth record: near Wassennar in Zuid-Holland from 15th to 20th November 1984*, caught on 20th and

died that day in a bird hospital; all previous records currently under review.

Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* PORTUGAL Only recent observation: near Silves in Algarve on 1st October 1983.

Tawny/Steppe Eagle *Aquila rapax* DENMARK Fifth and sixth records: Skagen in North Jutland on 26th May 1981, and Gedser in Lolland on 15th October 1981 (previous records were in 1975 and 1979, *Brit. Birds* 73: 258). GREECE Tenth record: shot near Thessaloniki in October 1982. POLAND First to third records: adult near Kłodzko in Bialskie Mountains, Lower Silesia, on 1st May 1978, immature near Gorlice in Carpathian Mountains on 13th July 1980, and immature female of *nipalensis* group caught near Koło in Konin on about 14th May 1984 and sent to Poznań zoo (where a fourth, another immature, is kept, said to be from Pomerania). SWEDEN Ninth to 11th records: at Blekinge from 15th January to at least 3rd March 1984 (perhaps an escape), immatures in Scania during 13th-31st August 1984, and at Ottenby in Öland on 14th August and, same individual, in Scania from 21st August to November.

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* DENMARK Fifth record: Stevns in Zealand on 24th August 1981 (cf. fifth Swedish record in Scania during 29th July to 23rd August and at Falsterbo on 24th August 1981). SPAIN Correction: figure in fifteenth 'European news' (*Brit. Birds* 77: 235) referred to breeding pairs, not to individuals.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* SPAIN Breeding population of Menorca in the Balearics seems to be sedentary: minimum winter number estimated to be 130. SWEDEN Eighth and ninth records: 28th August 1983, and 26th September 1984* (previous records in 1960, 1964, and five in 1980, *Brit. Birds* 75: 26; but none accepted for 1982, contra *Brit. Birds* 75: 570).

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* DENMARK Fourth record: Rubjerg in North Jutland on 11th May 1981 (cf. sixth Swedish record on 3rd June 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 570). ITALY First wintering for about a century: Sicily in 1981, 1982 and 1983.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* BELGIUM First breeding since 1967: three young reared (cf. increases in Federal Republic of Germany, Finland and Norway, and on passage in Denmark, *Brit. Birds* 73: 575; 74: 261; 76: 567; 77: 588). FAEROE ISLANDS Eighth record: juvenile at Sumba on 13th September and 28th-29th September 1984*.



155. Great Bustard *Otis tarda*, Netherlands, February 1985 (David Tomlinson)

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* FAEROE ISLANDS Fifth record: male found dead in October 1984*.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* SWEDEN Fourth record: calling at Fardume marsh in Gotland on 22nd-23rd June 1983.

Crested Coot *Fulica cristata* SPAIN First proof of breeding for decades: adult with five chicks in Guadalquivir Marismas on 15th June 1984.

Siberian White Crane *Grus leucogeranus* ESTONIAN SSR First record: flock of seven (6 adults, 1 juvenile) flying southwest past Tallinn on 30th September 1984*.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda* NETHERLANDS Small influx: about 15 in January-February 1985 (plate 155), about same as in winter 1981/82 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 570).

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* YUGOSLAVIA Third 20th-century record for Slovenia: Ankarani on 5th May 1984 (previous records in 1976 and 1980).

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* SWEDEN First for ten years: Ottenby in Öland on 2nd June 1981 (19th record).

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* SPAIN First record: adult at Torremolinos in Málaga on 3rd October 1982*. SWEDEN Ninth record: Varberg in Halland on 21st-22nd May 1983 (eighth was in July-August 1982, *Brit. Birds* 75: 570).

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* SPAIN First record: adult in full breeding plumage at Alcázar de San Juan (120 km SSE of Madrid) on 21st June 1981 (*La Gacilla* 64: 54-56).

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* MALTA Sixth record: Ghadira in August 1984. NORWAY First record: Rogaland in June 1984. POLAND Fourth record: near Puck during 5th-8th April 1984. (Cf. second Dutch record in August 1984, *Brit. Birds* 77: 588.)

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* ITALY Third record: caught near Catania on Sicily on 30th March 1978 (cf. first Norwegian record in June 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 591).

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* ITALY First breeding in Italian Alps: pair at Val Pusteria in Trentino-Alto Adige in July 1978. A small colony of less than ten pairs breeds in

Apennines. **SPAIN** First proved breeding: following discovery on French side of Pyrénées in 1980, adult with three chicks seen in Maranges, on Spanish side, on 17th June 1981.

Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* ITALY 17th record (and first for Sicily): caught near Siracusa on 6th October 1979.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* **SPAIN** First European record: adult in breeding plumage on salt pans at Sant Antoni on the Ebro Delta on 7th April 1979*.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* **POLAND** First record(s): adult at Jastarnia on Hel Peninsula on 4th July 1984, and, perhaps the same bird, at Rewa near Puck, close to Hel Peninsula, on 5th October 1984.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* **SWEDEN** Spring/summer records: Närke on 14th May 1983, Halland on 4th June 1983, Halland during 2nd-15th May 1984*, Skåne on 12th-13th May 1984* (also usual autumn records) (previous 'European News' have noted spring/summer records in Austria, Faeroe Islands, Finland, Norway, Malta and Poland, *Brit. Birds* 71: 584; 73: 258; 75: 269, 570; 77: 236, 588).

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* **BELGIUM** Continued breeding: after suspected breeding at Antwerp in 1981 and first proved breeding (pair with two chicks) in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 274), two pairs in 1983 and at least two pairs in 1984 at same locality.

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* **BELGIUM** First record: Zeebrugge during 1st-6th September 1984*. **SPAIN** First record: adult at Salinas de Llevant on Mallorca in the Balearics on 6th May 1983* (cf. first Finnish record in June 1983, *Brit. Birds* 76: 568).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* **BELGIUM** First record: Zeebrugge during 27th August to 11th September 1984*. **DENMARK** Fifth and sixth records: Skagen in North Jutland on 30th May 1981, and Ølseagle in Zealand on 8th September 1981. **ITALY** Fifth to seventh records: found dead at San Daniele Po in Lombardy on 19th October 1980, found dead at Saline di Cervia in Romagna in November 1980, and caught at Porto Badisco in Apulia on 9th October 1982.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* **FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY** Sixth Heligoland record in last 20 years: 4th June 1984*.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* **FINLAND** Fourth record: Pori on 29th

September 1984* (previous records were in May 1980, and two in September 1983). Correction: record in May 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 588) was first, not second.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* **ITALY** Nested in 1980-83 in Valli of Comacchio north of Ravenna.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* **SWEDEN** Highest-ever annual total: six in 1983 (also best-ever year in Finland, where 20 in 1983, *Brit. Birds* 77: 236).

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* **ITALY** First record: Laguna di Orbetello in Tuscany during 15th-25th October 1978.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* **BELGIUM** Fourth record: Zeebrugge on 17th-18th May 1984*. **DENMARK** Eighth record: Aflandshage in Zealand on 28th June 1981.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* **YUGOSLAVIA** Third record for Slovenia: Bukovci near Ptuj on 25th August 1984 (previous records in 1976 and 1980).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* **GREECE** Ninth record: pair at Messolonghi on 21st August 1983.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* **SPAIN** Winter census: 18,279 counted in January 1984, with 98.7% in Catalonia and Valencia, on Mediterranean coast. **SWEDEN** Third breeding attempt: paired with Common Gull *L. canus* in Öland in May-June 1983.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* **SPAIN** First breeding in Mediterranean: adults showing characters of *L. f. graellsii* incubating at three nests in colony of Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* in Ebro Delta in May 1983 (territorial behaviour had been noted at this locality in April 1981 and April 1982). **SWEDEN** Second and third records of *L. f. graellsii*: Öland on 28th March 1983 and 7th October 1983 ('probably overlooked!').

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* **SWEDEN** Highest-ever annual total: about 70 in 1983.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* **FRANCE** Southernmost breeding record: pair bred successfully on Ile de Ré in Charente-Maritime in spring 1984.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* **ITALY** Third and fourth records: Livorno in Tuscany during 6th-17th August 1982*, and near Siracusa on Sicily on 3rd-4th August 1983*.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* **DENMARK** Second and third records: Vejlerne in North Jutland on 21st May 1981, and

Klitholm in Møn on 23rd May 1981 (first was in May 1977, *Brit. Birds* 71: 584).

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY Decrease in breeding numbers in Schleswig-Holstein: 150 pairs in 31 colonies in 1981 and 160 pairs in 39 colonies in 1982, compared with 800 pairs at 101 sites in 1966-69, an 80% decrease (over last 30 years, 90% decrease).

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* SWEDEN 14th record: live bird in Halland on 5th November 1983.

Little Auk *Alle alle* SWEDEN Highest-ever numbers along western coast in November 1984 (e.g. 60 passing Getterön in Halland on 5th).

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* DENMARK Highest-ever daily total: 70,000 on migration at Uterslev in Zealand on 13th October 1984.

Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* FINLAND First record: near Helsinki from 16th January to at least mid February 1985. SWEDEN Fifth record: Halland from 25th December 1976 to 6th April 1977 (none since). (To add to a strange set of winter records, the third Norwegian record was during 21st February to 20th March 1978, *Brit. Birds* 73: 259.)

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* LUXEMBOURG Breeding resumed: 'May now be considered reinstated as breeding species after long absence' (cf. first breeding for 70 years in Belgium in 1982, *Brit. Birds* 75: 571).

Hawk Owl *Surnia ulula* DENMARK Irruption of 1983 included 600 sightings of about 200 different individuals, most in November 1983, last one at Skagen in North Jutland on 5th June 1984 (cf. irruption also to Norway and Sweden in 1983/84, *Brit. Birds* 77: 238).

Little Owl *Athene noctua* SWEDEN First for 30 years: freshly dead in Skåne on 29th November 1981 (second Finnish record was in May 1983, *Brit. Birds* 76: 568).

Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* SPAIN First records for Spanish Pyrénees: found at three localities in subalpine forests of mountain pine *Pinus uncinata* at 1,850-2,000 m in May 1983 to January 1984.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* SWEDEN Fifth and sixth records: April 1984* and June 1984* (annual now since first in 1980, *Brit. Birds* 73: 576; 75: 571; 77: 238, 589).

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* ITALY Ninth record: caught near Siracusa on Sicily in May 1979 (this is the first record of

this species to be noted in 'European news').

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* SWEDEN Good influx: at least 29 in eight localities in May-June 1984.

Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti* MALTA Deletion: record in April 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 589) has not been accepted by Maltese rarities committee.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* LUXEMBOURG Disastrous population crash in 1984.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* SWITZERLAND Eighth record: near Watt in Zürich on 4th June 1984.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* FAEROE ISLANDS First record: Hattarvik on Fugloy on 4th October 1984*. FINLAND Fourth record: mist-netted at Signildskär bird-station on 20th September 1984 (previous records were in October 1978, October 1980 and September 1982, *Brit. Birds* 77: 239). MALTA Third record: ringed in November 1984 (previous two were in October 1977 and November 1983, *Brit. Birds* 77: 239).

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* SWEDEN Ninth and tenth records of *M. f. feldegg*: Skåne on 5th May 1983, and Ottenby in Öland on 14th May 1983.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* NETHERLANDS First record: trapped, near Castricum in Noord-Holland from 24th August to 8th September 1984*. SWEDEN Spring records: Gotland on 30th April 1983, Närke on 1st May 1983, and Öland on 30th May 1983 (most of previous 24 records were in autumn).

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* FINLAND Increasing: best-ever year in 1983, with 17 records (bringing grand total to 103); one or two breeding records annually since 1975 (cf. increases and range expansion in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 71: 585; 72: 279; 73: 577; 75: 572).

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* NORWAY Larger than usual invasion in October-November 1984 in south, 'but most passed through quickly, doubtless due to failure of berry crop of rowan *Sorbus*, and very few remained in January 1985.'

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* FINLAND Correction: record at Lågskär bird-station (*Brit. Birds* 77: 589) was on 29th April 1984, not 29th August 1984. SWEDEN Seventh record: Öland on 30th April 1983.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* DENMARK Common Birds Census in 1984 showed first decrease since censuses started in 1976.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* FAEROE ISLANDS First record: Húsar on Kalsoy on 5th October 1984*. SWEDEN 13th and 14th records: caught in Halland on 19th April 1983, and singing in Uppland during 31st May to 26th June 1983.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* FAEROE ISLANDS Fifth to seventh records: Suðuroy on 18th, 21st and 23rd September 1984*. ITALY First breeding: two pairs in Lombardy in July 1983*, nest in French Alps near Piedmont frontier in July 1983*, both *L. s. svecica*.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* SWITZERLAND Seventh and eighth records: white-throated male near Ascona in Tessin during 3rd-8th April 1984, and black-throated male at Alvaschein in Graubünden on 11th May 1984.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* NORWAY First record: Jaeren in Rogaland in mid December 1984. SWEDEN Sixth record (first in spring): Sörmland on 21st April 1983.

Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* FINLAND Second record: Parainen from 1st December to mid December 1984.

Black-throated/Red-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* SPAIN First record: adult of race *T. r. ruficollis* at Mieres in Asturias on 12th February 1983*. SWEDEN 11th record: Ångermanland on 27th April 1977.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* SWEDEN 11th and 12th records: Halland on 6th August 1983 and Småland on 17th September 1983 (tenth was in August 1980, *Brit. Birds* 75: 28).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* NETHERLANDS Second record: trapped, Makkum in Friesland on 13th October 1984*.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* FRANCE First record: caught in Baie de Seine in Seine-Maritime on 26th August 1984.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* FINLAND Second record: singing male caught and ringed at Långskär bird-observatory on 26th May 1984 (first was in June 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 29). FRANCE First and second records: Ouessant in Finistère on 15th September 1984*, and Olonne in Vendée on 23rd September 1984*.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* FRANCE First record outside breeding range: Ouessant in late October 1984*. GREECE Fourth record: two near Karystos on 23rd November 1984. NETHERLANDS First record:

IJmuiden in Noord-Holland on 2nd November 1984*.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY Sixth to ninth records for Heligoland: 15th June 1978, 24th June 1981, 6th July 1981 and 11th July 1982. SWEDEN Tenth and 11th records: Nidingen in Halland on 24th May 1983 and 8th July 1983 (sixth to ninth records were in May-June and October 1981, *Brit. Birds* 77: 241).

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* FAEROE ISLANDS First record: Sumba during 13th-15th September 1984*. FRANCE First record: Ouessant in Finistère in late October 1984*.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* BELGIUM Influx: at least nine on east coast from 29th September to third week of November 1984*. DENMARK Good influx: 16 in autumn 1984, last on 18th October*. ESTONIAN SSR 14th and 15th records: in autumn 1984. ITALY Tenth and 11th records: Salò in Lombardy on 2nd January 1980, and hit by car at Capo Murro di Porco on Sicily on 2nd December 1980. LATVIAN SSR Highest-ever number: 12 trapped at Pape in autumn 1984. PORTUGAL First and second records: ringed at Odelouca in Algarve on 15th October 1983 and 26th October 1984.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* FINLAND Tenth record: Aspskär seabird-station on 17th October 1984.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* ESTONIAN SSR First to fifth records of eastern race *P. c. tristis*: in 1984, three caught at Kabli (where large-scale ringing started in 1970) and two at Sôrve.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* FINLAND Second record: male at Långskär bird-station from 23rd October to 5th November 1984 (only previous record was 35 years ago, despite growth in Swedish breeding population).

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* FINLAND Seventh record: three mistnetted together and ringed at Långskär bird-station on 30th September 1984, staying until 8th October (fifth and sixth records were in October 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 271). LUXEMBOURG Autumn passage: 60 trapped during 26th September to 24th October 1984 (three with Heligoland rings); autumn passage first noted in 1982. (Cf. increases, passage and vagrancy in Belgium, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and Yugoslavia, *Brit. Birds* 72: 592; 73: 578; 74: 262; 77: 590).

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* SWEDEN

Second record: first-winter Halland on 3rd October 1984*.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* DENMARK Large concentration: 615 on 12th June 1984, of which 425 departed over the sea at Hammeren on Bornholm.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* SWEDEN First record: first-winter caught at Ottenby in Öland on 1st October 1984* (cf. first Finnish record in October 1982, *Brit. Birds* 76: 276).

Avadavat *Amandava amandava* SPAIN Breeding population firmly established: first observation near Madrid in 1974 (where still present in 1984), but now established in irrigation areas along 110km of River Guadina in Badajoz; breeding takes place from August to November; several roosts, containing total of 4,000 individuals in January 1984.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* FAEROE ISLANDS Second record: Fugloy on 3rd October 1984*.

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* LUXEMBOURG Still common (and breeding reports) in early 1984, following irruption in autumn 1983, but almost entirely absent since August. (The 1983 irruption was also noted in Belgium and France, *Brit. Birds* 76: 570, as well as Britain.)

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NETHERLANDS Kees Scharringa, Trompenburg 15, 1852 CB Heiloo

NORWAY Geoffrey Acklam, Nordliveien 18, 1320 Stabekk

POLAND Dr L. Tomiałojć, Wrocław University, Museum of Natural History, Sienkiewicza 21, 50-335 Wrocław

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* DENMARK Best-ever year: total of about 160, with more than five at ten localities in spring 1984. (Almost every 'European news' has included reports of increases or range expansion of this species.)

Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina* FAEROE ISLANDS First record: ringed on Sumba during 21st-29th September 1984*.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* ESTONIAN SSR Second record: Sõrve on 13th October 1984 (first record concerned a pair in April 1979, *Brit. Birds* 72: 593). LATVIAN SSR Second record: Pape in October 1984. SWITZERLAND Ninth record: Allaman in Vand on 25th March 1984. YUGOSLAVIA First record for Slovenia: Kleče near Ljubljana on 9th February 1985.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* SWEDEN Ninth to 13th records: four in southern Sweden between 23rd May and 19th June 1984* and one in Norrbotten on 26th July 1984* (eight previous records were at similar times of year, and considered to refer to wild birds; also cf. Finnish records during 1980-84, three in May and one in August, *Brit. Birds* 77: 591).

PORTUGAL Dr Antonio Teixeira, CEMPA, Serviço Nacional de Parques, Reservas e Conservação da Natureza, Rua da Lapa 73, 1200 Lisboa

SPAIN Dr Eduardo de Juana, Departamento de Zoología, Facultad de Ciencias, C-XV, Universidad Autónoma, Madrid 34

SWEDEN Per Alström & Magnus Ullman, Marholmsvägen 105, S-43600 Askim

SWITZERLAND Dr N. Zbinden, Schweizerische Vogelwarte, CH-6204 Sempach

YUGOSLAVIA Iztok Geister, 64202 Naklo, Pokopaliska pot 13

No information was received from Albania, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Iceland or Romania.

PhotoSpot

13. Corn Bunting

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* is one of those passerines with a single complete annual moult in autumn (August to October), and also one of that small and oddly mixed group of species which has a complete post-juvenile moult, after which adults and young are inseparable. These two excellent portraits not only capture the distinctive personality of the species, but also illustrate a couple of more academic points: the distinctive bunting bill-structure (sharply arched cutting edges on the upper and lower mandibles), and the change of appearance, through wear of pale feather fringes, from the sharply streaked and wing-barred appearance of the fresh plumage in

156. Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, Worcestershire, January 1979 (*M. C. Wilkes*)





157. Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, Portugal, May 1980 (Michael Gore)

late autumn and winter (plate 156) to the comparatively drab and less-defined patterns in summer (plate 157). In fresh plumage, the sometimes well-marked head can be striking, with the central crown-stripe, supercilium, and moustachial and malar stripes surprisingly—for this supposedly 'plain' bunting—recalling that of other female and immature buntings.

PJG

Mystery photographs

103 The slim body and bill, long tail and legs, and habitat of last month's mystery bird (plates 118 & 119, repeated here as 158 & 159) clearly indicate a species of pipit *Anthus*. The prominence of the pale supercilium and submoustachial stripe should narrow the field to Richard's *A. novaeseelandiae* or Tawny Pipit *A. campestris*. The boldness of the dark markings on the breast and upperparts seems to lead us straight to Richard's Pipit, but there's a catch. It is in fact a Tawny Pipit in juvenile plumage, photographed by Knud Pederson in Denmark on 22nd July 1982.



158 & 159. Juvenile Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*. Denmark, July 1982 (*Knud Pederson*)

While full juvenile plumage is unlikely to be seen in Britain and Ireland, some individuals may retain a large part of it into late autumn and then cause confusion with Richard's because of their dark and streaked appearance.

Juvenile Tawny Pipits start the moult to first-winter plumage in late July

160. Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* moulting from juvenile to first-winter plumage. Netherlands, September 1981 (*René Pop*)



or August. It involves usually all of the head and body feathers, a variable amount of wing-coverts and tertials, but not the primaries, secondaries or tail feathers. Full first-winter plumage closely resembles adult-winter plumage (the latter acquired by a usually complete moult during July to September). It is possible that some juveniles may complete the post-juvenile moult quickly, so that it may not be safe to age adult-like individuals after the end of August, as pointed out by Nick Riddiford (*Brit. Birds* 70: 83-84). In practice, however, most young Tawny Pipits retain at least a few of the distinctively juvenile-patterned breast feathers, scapulars, wing-coverts and tertials during their migration in late August to November and they can then be safely aged. The individual in plate 160 (photographed on 28th September) is showing at least three prominently spotted juvenile breast-side feathers, at least a dozen dark-centred juvenile scapulars, and all the sharply pale-fringed juvenile wing-coverts and tertials. It is, therefore, clearly a juvenile moulting to first-winter plumage, and it may well continue to retain some of these age-diagnostic feathers well into the winter.

At all ages, Richard's Pipit (plate 161) is best told from Tawny by its pale lores (dark line from bill to eye on Tawny); extensively pale ear-coverts (tend to be more uniform on Tawny); and broad pale area around eye (*thin* pale eye-ring on Tawny); the bare-faced expression of Richard's recalls that of a Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, whereas Tawny Pipit's is more like that of a juvenile or winter Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (though the brown ear-covert patch can also be reminiscent of Skylark). Other features of Richard's may be more difficult to discern, such as its rufous-washed flanks (usually pale buff or creamy on Tawny), stronger malar stripe, stouter bill, straighter and longer hind claw, and white outer tail feathers (off-white or buff on Tawny). Both Richard's and Tawny can give

161. Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Netherlands, September 1981 (C. J. Breek)



rather similar half-hearted chirpy calls when feeding or making short flights, but the classic full flight calls are usually diagnostic once they have been learned: a loud throaty 'schreep' from Richard's, and a chirpy 'teeuk' from Tawny.

PJG

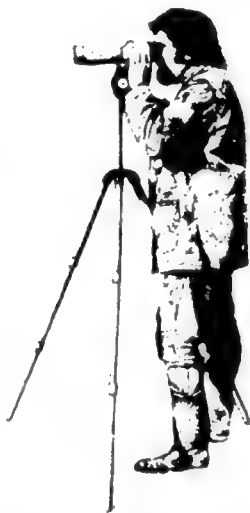


162. Mystery photograph 104. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes

Petrels eating contraceptives, polythene and plastic beads

As part of a more detailed study on the food and feeding ecology of the Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, regurgitations from adults and chicks from colonies on the Firths of Forth and Clyde, Scotland, have been collected and analysed. Preliminary results show Fulmars to be feeding regularly and naturally at night, and scavenging opportunistically from the sea surface by day. Among the more unnatural items I have recorded are rubber contraceptives, from adults and chicks, probably picked up by adults in mistake for polychaets (Nereidae) or squids (Cephalapoda), and sheet polythene from what looks like carrier bags. Bubbles of expanded polystyrene are frequently ingested, in quantities which almost fill the stomach; I have also found these in regurgitations of Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* from the same areas. Adult and nestling Fulmars, while being ringed, have also disgorged numbers of plastic beads (up to 20 from one chick). These are discoidal coloured beads, about 5mm in diameter, used industrially in bulk for injection moulding and the like; they are composed of polyethylene resin which solidifies on contact with water



during manufacture, and they float. The beads find their way into the marine environment when malfunctions in the filtration process occur, sometimes resulting in millions being discharged. At Grangemouth on the Forth, there is a plastics factory producing polyethylene beads, and this is probably the source of the pollution in the Forth sea-area. I have also taken these beads from the stomachs of Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* from Wales, and from Storm Petrels. In the case of one Storm Petrel, the single bead had blocked the duodenum, which may have reduced or stopped the digestive processes to the extent that the petrel became so weak that it eventually died.

These items reflect the amount of waste material finding its way into the sea, and the resin beads are a possible source of concern. Petrels in general seem unable to differentiate between digestible foods and indigestible human artefacts which simulate such foods.

BERNARD ZONFRILLO

28 Brodie Road, Glasgow G21 3SB

We have also received a letter from J. B. Kemp reporting his discovery of two gull pellets containing four and two condoms, respectively, and another with a tight bunch of three rubber bands, at Welney, Norfolk, in March 1985. Eds.

Woodpigeon alighting on water apparently to avoid Carrion Crow

On 18th May 1982, while walking beside the lake in St James's Park, London, my attention was drawn to two birds flying close together near the surface of the lake. As I turned to look at them, the leading one splashed down on to the surface of the water and I saw that it was a Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*. The bird following was a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*, which continued to the bank and landed; after a few seconds, it flew back over the lake and swooped down towards the pigeon, which flapped its wings but did not take off. The crow returned to the bank and landed, but after a short pause flew away. The pigeon remained on the water for possibly as long as two minutes and then, without hesitation or difficulty, took off from the water and flew strongly up to a tree. There are a number of records of feral Rock Doves *Columba livia* swimming (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 68: 467-468; 71: 138-139), while, according to Miss Stainton (*Brit. Birds* 71: 138), it is not unusual for Woodpigeons to alight on the lake in St James's Park. This particular instance seems remarkable in that the pigeon may have deliberately alighted on the water to avoid the crow. P. J. OLIVER

1 Albany Court, Palmer Street, London SW1

Derek Goodwin has commented as follows: 'I suspect that the alighting in/on water may have been accidental in attempting to avoid the crow, but I may be wrong in this. The interesting thing is that, accidental or deliberate, the behaviour was effective. Especially in view of the recent note (78: 235) on failure of Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* to pick up a Feral Pigeon [Rock Dove] that had fallen into water, similar observations would be useful.' Eds

Cuckoo drinking Having photographed adult Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* at the same site at Swindon, West Midlands, for three years, it came as a great surprise when, in May 1984, a male Cuckoo, which had been feeding about 15cm away from a prepared bathing pool by my hide, suddenly walked a

few paces forward to the water and drank very briefly. Luckily, I had my camera set up and was able to capture the moment (plate 163). The surprise I express is due to the fact that, although over a dozen different Cuckoos fed within a metre of the pool day after day for the three seasons,

163. Male Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* momentarily drinking at artificial pool, West Midlands, May 1984 (A. T. Moffett)



this was the only time that one had shown any interest in water. From the hide, I observed mating, swaying, fighting and calling, but no Cuckoo ever bathed or attempted to bathe at the pool which I had built expressly for that purpose.

A. T. MOFFETT

122 Parkes Hall Road, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 3RJ

Ian Wyllie commented that he has never seen a Cuckoo drinking, nor a photograph of one doing so; Eric Hosking has, on several occasions, observed—but never photographed—a Cuckoo drinking; Mike Kendall of the BBC Natural History Unit has drawn attention to the filming of a Cuckoo drinking at an artificial pool in Buckinghamshire in 1977. Thus, while Cuckoos may drink more often than the photographic record suggests, we are pleased to be able to publish A. T. Moffett's photograph. EDS

Rock Pipit associating with man During March 1982, on Jethou, Channel Islands, one of the island staff had been engaged for several weeks on removing tons of granite beach pebbles which had accumulated against the landing pier. He worked, with shovel and tractor, from about 50 m below high-tide mark, up to the top of the tideline, shifting pebbles from a depth of about 1 m against the jetty wall. Intermingled with the pebbles was much rotting seaweed, mostly bladder wrack *Fucus vesiculosus* and knotted wrack *Ascophyllum nodosum*. After some weeks, the workman mentioned that he was constantly accompanied by one little bird, which waited for his arrival each day and had become so tame as to be likened to a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* following a gardener's spade. The bird would potter down the beach, in front of the tractor, and then perch on a nearby stone, waiting for the pebbles and seaweed to be disturbed so that it could feed on the abundant supply of marine creatures thereby exposed. In particular, it fed greedily on sea-slaters *Ligia oceanica*, even the largest ones over 2.5 cm long, seizing each one crossways in its beak and flying a short distance to rocks to swallow it. I went down to identify the bird and was not particularly surprised to find that it was a Rock Pipit *Anthus spinoletta petrosus*.

J. S. KENDRICK

Isle of Jethou, PO Box No. 5, St Peter Port, Guernsey, C.I.

Rasping calls of Dunnock in presence of Cuckoo At about 08.15 GMT on 8th May 1982, in a small moorland valley near West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, I heard the repeated, shrill, piping alarm calls of a Dunnock *Prunella modularis*. I investigated and found a Dunnock reacting to a perched Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*. In a short time, however, I heard repeated, low-pitched rasping calls, in addition to the high-frequency ones. At first, I thought that the rasps were uttered by a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, although they did not have the normal quality of sound for that species and were slightly higher in pitch. I then saw that they were being made by a second Dunnock, apparently one of a pair. After the Cuckoo had flown off, the agitated Dunnocks continued calling for a few more minutes. I then found a Dunnocks' nest containing one egg in a low bush, in the centre of the area where the birds had been calling. As both sexes of the Dunnock

look alike, I could not tell if the rasps were produced by the male or the female; the bird giving them was not heard to make any other sounds at the time. I have not previously heard these rasping calls; perhaps they are given only in the presence of a Cuckoo which has intruded into the breeding territory of a pair of Dunnocks.

A. P. RADFORD

Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

Dr Barbara Snow has commented as follows: 'So far as I know, the rasping call described has not previously been documented for the Dunnock. The only observation I have which might be relevant was when I saw a Dunnock nest containing small young being preyed on by a weasel *Mustela nivalis*: besides the alarm "seep" by both members of the pair, the male sang very low-volume song without any intervals; this form of song, which sounds very different from normal Dunnock song, is well known to us, as it occurs during territorial boundary conflicts between males. I doubt if Dr Radford would have interpreted this as a rasping call.'

EDS

Persistent attack on potential nest predator by Blackbird In 1981 and 1982, a pair of Blackbirds *Turdus merula* nested low down in a small conifer near the top of my parent's garden near Southampton, Hampshire. In May-June 1981, the male frequently drove off my parents' Siamese cat whenever it appeared in the garden. On 12th June 1982, following similar behaviour to that of the previous year, the male Blackbird attacked the cat, which was fully 10 m from the nest, and drove it into the house: flying very low (about 30 cm) above the cat's back, and a short distance behind its head, the Blackbird pursued the cat through the conservatory door, right through the kitchen and into the hall (i.e. through three doorways and around one right-angled corner), all the while flying low over the cat's back, but not calling once inside the house; it did not land, but, when the cat had scuttled to a safe hiding-place, flew back to the garden without any difficulty with doors, walls or other obstacles. The cat appeared quite terrified. I was surprised at the persistence of this Blackbird in penetrating so far inside a house.

DAVID A. CHRISTIE

4 Steventon Road, Harefield, Southampton SO2 5HA

Blackcaps foliage-bathing in gardens Regular observations during 1980-82 on the drinking and bathing habits of the birds in a suburban garden at Tring, Hertfordshire, have shown that passage migrant and wintering Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* are infrequent visitors to the centrally placed pond, where they sip water. Short spells of active bathing at the pond have been watched twice in autumn, but on seven occasions I have seen individuals in March, May, August, and September (four records) bathing by brushing their head, wings and body feathers vigorously against and through the saturated leafy branches of flowering cherry *Prunus*, mock orange *Philadelphus coronarius*, white dogwood *Swida alba* and ivy *Hedera helix*. In every case, the bout of bathing activity followed, or took place during, a rain shower.

DAVID GLUE

BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR

Letters

Origin of British Glaucous Gulls I read with interest A. R. Dean's comments on the possible origins of Glaucous Gulls *Larus hyperboreus* in Britain and related incidences of occurrences of hybrid Glaucous × Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* (*Brit. Birds* 77: 165-166). Both Glaucous and Iceland Gulls *L. glaucoides* are annual winter visitors to southwest England. Virtually without exception, the former is the more numerous, Devon and Cornwall producing ten or more in most years, mainly around the more important fish-landing areas of Plymouth, Falmouth and those of the far west of Cornwall. I have long been unconvinced by the theory that these are of Icelandic origin. First, very few ever show any trace of hybridisation, and hybrids are certainly not annual in either county: even in years when 30 or more Glaucous are recorded, they still may not muster a single hybrid. (I would refute thoughts of overlooking hybrids, other than an individual with its Glaucous parentage so repressed by back breeding that dominant Herring features almost completely mask them; even exceptionally small females or runts not much larger than Herring Gull have occurred, but display all the other classic features of the species.) Secondly, I have consistently noted that Glaucous Gull influxes, which in southwest England normally occur between late December and early March, coincide throughout this period with severe and sometimes prolonged (five or more days) northwesterly airstreams from Arctic North America and Greenland, when the gulls' arrival is predictable. Such conditions are uncommon and not necessarily annual.

I consider that occurrences of white-winged gulls in certain areas of the Southwest are caused in part by the gulls' need to seek shelter and to feed after tracking with northwesterly airstreams. Such Glaucous Gulls from seas off southeast Greenland would soon reach western Britain, and Ireland, eventually meeting inshore trawlers (those from southwest England range about 80 km out to sea) which would encourage them to pursue a food source into harbour. *BWP* (3: 842-844) states that the east Greenland population of Glaucous Gull is migratory, and that its wintering range, although not known, is thought to be Iceland (other populations are much less or not at all migratory). It is not inconceivable that these migratory gulls—of much purer stock than Icelandic Glaucous—are the ones that track with northwesterly gales to western Britain; and even winds not directly from Greenland could still produce wandering Glaucous of this population, from wintering areas around southern Iceland, on other suitable weather systems.

Many Glaucous Gulls arriving in December-January in the Southwest are first-winters. These are probably of the same Greenland population, having left the breeding area in December, long after the adults (*BWP* 3: 844), and are perhaps more liable to wander farther, as do other stages of immature Glaucous Gulls which visit the Southwest far more frequently than do adults.

I suspect that the higher incidence of Glaucous and Iceland Gulls in western Britain and Ireland in relatively recent times may be due to these

opportunistic wandering gulls attaching themselves to trawlers after first following suitable westerly winds, rather than to a definite migration (which would surely involve thousands annually, rather than tens or occasionally hundreds) only comparatively recently detected by British birdwatchers, as postulated by A. R. Dean.

VIC TUCKER

Periglis, 4 Clovelly View, Turnchapel, Plymouth, Devon

A. R. Dean has commented as follows: 'Vic Tucker's considered opinions on the origins of Glaucous Gulls reaching southwest England provide a valuable addition to the discussion. Although I would not like to speculate on the exact mechanism of their arrival, I am pleased to see that the conditions and timing of arrivals in southwest England support the idea that Greenland is an important source region. As indicated in my original letter (77: 165-166), however, I suspect that, within Britain as a whole, there are important geographical differences in the origin of Glaucous Gulls. Thus, in the West Midlands region, arrivals of Glaucous Gulls and apparent Arctic Herring Gulls *L. a. argentatus* tend to correlate, suggesting a common origin in the northeast. It is of interest that, farther to the southwest, at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, both *L. a. argentatus* and Glaucous Gulls remain relatively scarce (K. E. Vinicombe *in litt.*). A careful (and cautious) study of all such specific and geographical correlations could be illuminating.' Ebs

Jizz as an aid to identification I agree with much of Andrew Harrop's 'Points of view' (*Brit. Birds* 77: 16), but 'overcoming false assertions concerning "jizz"' calls for some comment. I am sure he is referring to difficult, usually rare, species, but I hope the impression that jizz should be ignored—and its use discouraged—is not carried through into general birdwatching advice and literature. One can identify a bird on jizz only after previous experience (which is why it may fail with vagrants), but it may, nevertheless, serve to isolate an unexpected bird amongst its commoner fellows. The difficulty is not so much recognition of jizz as its *description*. It is, so often, more or less indefinable. Anyone who has lectured about birds, written about them—or simply taken comprehensive notes—will have struggled with this problem. We all know the jizz of a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* or a Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, but putting it across in words to someone who doesn't is tricky. Think of something more subtle, such as a Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* or a Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, and the problem may be more easily appreciated. But that is not to say that jizz should be thrown out of the window. Who ever identifies passing Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* on anything else?: St Ives seawatchers probably don't bother to check their leg colour! Merlin *Falco columbarius* is another bird almost always 90% jizz, and Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* can be too. Awkward species can often be resolved by jizz better than anything else; it is just difficult to say why! Judgment of size, structure, and so on can be difficult, as already discussed in *BB*, but I would not like to think that 'constant, real and observable plumage criteria' (much as I appreciate them) become the only means of identifying birds, or of satisfying critics that one had done so. I am sure that many readers will know of birds misidentified, even over several days, until someone comes along, with prior experience of the species, to say 'Of course it isn't—it just doesn't look like one.' Remember Bill Oddie's example (in his *Little Black Bird Book*, 1980) of a description reading equally well for Skylark *Alauda arvensis*,

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* and Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*—a bit extreme, but illustrating the point. Seabird experts have long been trying to move in the opposite direction (often with too little support), and I hope this continues where relevant. It is the sharing of knowledge in this field which will prove the stumbling block. With beginners developing their identification skills, learning commoner birds, I would suggest that appreciation of jizz should be encouraged from the start. Another question then arises. If we do develop better ways of describing it, should it be fed to everyone in books, or is it better that they spend a few years learning jizz for themselves?

R. A. HUME

15 Cedar Gardens, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1EY

I fully concur with Dr J. T. R. Sharrock's comments ('Points of view', *Brit. Birds* 77: 204): jizz must have its rightful place as one aid to identification; this is how many rarities and vagrants are first noticed. The reasons that scorn is sometimes poured on it as a method of identification on finding an unusual bird are perhaps, first, that it is not a craft easily learnt, and, secondly, that many—though thankfully not all—birders are interested only in seeing birds, not watching them.

T. W. PARMENTER

22 The Kiln, Burgess Hill, Sussex

The more experienced and skilled the observer, the more jizz is used to identify familiar birds. Probably the majority of visual identifications are made in quick or distant views without a single plumage feature being seen.

Caution is surely advisable, however, when jizz is used to distinguish an unfamiliar rarity from a similar common species. While features of stance, posture, behaviour, flight action and so on may provide useful initial pointers to 'something different', confirmatory plumage details are vital. Identification of vagrants, such as Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* or Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, need 'minutiae', but if you understand a bird's plumage topography, and own a good telescope, they are actually not all that 'minute'.

P. J. GRANT

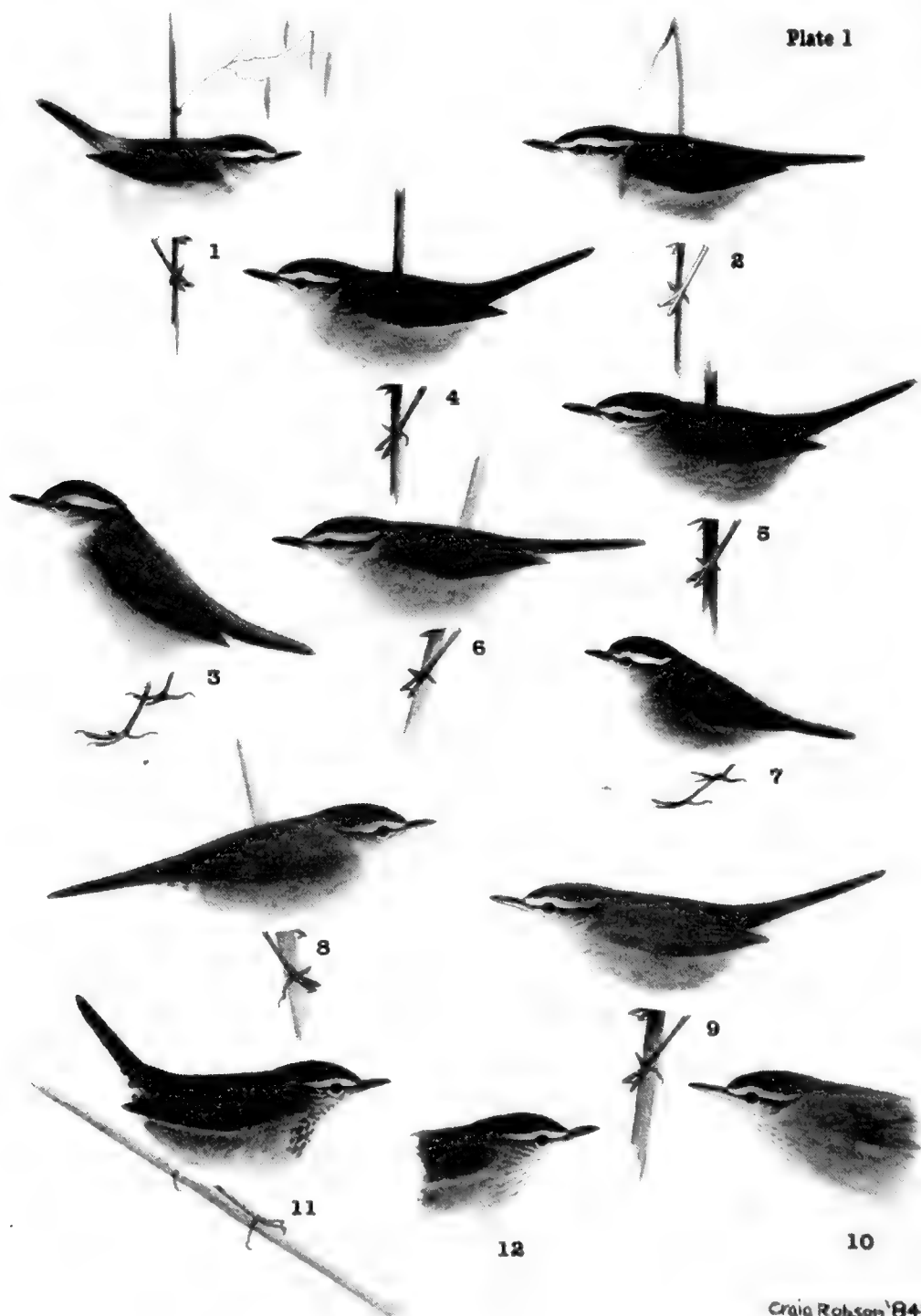
14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD

Announcements

Payments to 'BB' by GIRO We should like to remind all subscribers that payments can be made to British Birds Ltd by means of GIRO. Our UK Post Office GIRO account number is 37 588 6303. This method of payment may be particularly useful to subscribers who do not have sterling or US dollar bank accounts. When arranging payment, please do not forget to write to us as well, so that we know *why* the money has been deposited in our

account. In addition to GIRO payments, we can accept cheques (checks), postal orders and international money orders in £ sterling or in US\$, but not book tokens.

'A Guide to the Birds of Nepal' By Carol & Tim Inskipp, this new, substantial book (392 pages, over 670 maps, many line-drawings and eight very useful colour plates of difficult-to-identify warblers and finches) will be published by Croom Helm this month. The paintings, by Craig Robson and Richard Grimmett, will be very useful to birders visiting any Asian country (see black-and-white copy of one of the colour plates).



By a special arrangement—exclusive to subscribers to *British Birds* and members of the Oriental Bird Club—you can obtain your copy post free (to UK & Irish addresses), immediately that it is available, through British BirdShop, and with a reduction of £2.00 on all prepublication orders. Please use the British BirdShop form on page ix *now*.



David Hunt (*Bryan Bland*)
One of many illustrations
by Bryan Bland in *Confes-*
sions of a Scilly Birdman

David Hunt's autobiography As many of his friends will be aware, the late David Hunt had completed his autobiography shortly before his tragic death in India. The book, titled by David *Confessions of a Scilly Birdman*, will be published in September.

The publishers, Croom Helm, have agreed to donate 50p to a fund in David's memory for every copy of the book sold through British BirdShop. We know that there will be many *BB* readers who will want to buy a copy. Books ordered now will be despatched (post free to UK & Ireland) as soon as copies become available. Please use the form on page ix.

Requests

Sightings of White-tailed Eagles The number of White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* released from the Isle of Rhum in the Inner Hebrides has now reached 72, with a final ten to be freed in 1985. Each bird is individually marked with a BTO ring and coloured rings (although some of these may now have been lost). The last 30 to be liberated were fitted with large patagial wing-tags of coloured plastic, numbered 0 to 9. Some of the eagles have now dispersed from Rhum, a few as far as Shetland. Both the NCC and RSPB carefully monitor the birds after release, but we suspect that many birdwatchers may not have felt it worthwhile reporting sightings of these birds. Casual records are, however, extremely useful in building up a detailed picture of the White-tailed Eagles' dispersal and survival. We would be pleased to receive any records, including details of place, date, number and approximate age of the birds, what they were doing and any colour marks identified. Please supply details of observations to John A. Love, NCC, 9 Culduthel Road, Inverness; Roy H. Dennis, RSPB, Landberg, North Kessock, Inverness IV1 1XD; or Roger A. Broad, RSPB, 6 Birch Road, Killearn, Glasgow.

Spanish rare birds committee A rarities committee (Comité de Rarezas) has been established by the Spanish society, Sociedad Española de Ornitología. Birdwatchers who have visited or will be visiting Spain are requested to send details of rare birds to Dr Eduardo de Juana, Sociedad Española de Ornitología, Facultad de Biología, Tercer Pabellón, Planta 1X, Ciudad Universitaria, 28040 Madrid, Spain, or to Andrew M. Paterson, Edificio San Gabriel, 2-4º-A, Escritor Adolfo Reyes, 29000 Torremolinos, Málaga, Spain.

Transparencies request Anyone with high-quality colour transparencies of a 1984 rarity is asked to loan the originals to us for possible use (perhaps in colour) in the next rarities report. To be considered, transparencies must arrive with Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ) before 1st August.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Hayle inquiry The Department of the Environment has now called for a Public Inquiry in early July to review planning permissions on the Hayle Estuary, Cornwall. John Waldon tells us that this was due to pressure from birdwatchers; letters were received from all over Britain, some, we hope, in response to John's appeal which appeared in January's 'News and comment' (*Brit. Birds* 78: 59). Let us now hope for a positive result to the inquiry.

Poole Harbour well? British Petroleum has been given permission for an appraisal well to be drilled on Furzey Island, Poole Harbour, Dorset. It is disappointing that the opportunity to assess the overall possible environmental impact of the drilling was not taken now. If the well proves to be good, as is likely, then the pressure will be on to get the oil out. One positive note was sounded by the Planning Inspector, who was not keen on drilling taking place on the southern shores of the harbour or on Studland. Poole Harbour and its surrounding shores are of national and international importance to many bird species, and we should watch the progress of the present activity with great vigilance.

Siberians in China We have been informed by Jeffery Boswall of the first-ever official British ornithological expedition to the People's Republic of China, which is spending mid March to early June studying migration at Beidaihehaibin, on the coast of Hebei province (250 km east of Peking). The leader is Martin Williams of Darwin College, Cambridge, and six other UK ornithologists are involved for varying periods. The latest news received by Jeffery is that by 12th April the passage of cranes had included 4,376 Cranes *Grus grus*, 303 Hooded Cranes *G. monacha*, 244 Japanese Cranes *G. japonensis* and no less than 652 Siberian Cranes *G. leucogeranus*—probably over half the world population. These, and all other observations, will be compared with the work done by the Danish ornithologist Axel Hemmingesen at the same location from 1942 to 1945 while interned by the Japanese. The Siberian Cranes are no doubt some of the 800 or so

recently discovered to be wintering at Lake Poyang in Jiangxi province (central south-east China). Another, much smaller, population winters in Iran and India.

Young Ornithologists of the Year The 1984 award ceremony was held at The Lodge, the three prizewinners later accompanying Peter Holden and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock on an afternoon birdwatching trip (plate 164). We are glad that *British Birds* will again be sponsoring this annual event in 1985. Members of the Young Ornithologists' Club can find the rules of the competition in their magazine, *Bird Life*.

The Stock Pigeon Various moves to rationalise the English names of species on the British and Irish list include the possibility of calling all species in the genus *Columba* 'pigeon', and all species in the genus *Streptopelia* 'dove'. Naturally, that expert on pigeons and doves, Derek Goodwin, was consulted. His response was as follows:

With apologies, but not many, to Wordsworth

I hear a Stock Dove sing or say
'I've kept this name for many a day.
But egg-heads now, at *British Birds*,
Who like to mess about with words.
Propose to change mine to Stock Pigeon,
Which rhymes with nothing but religion
And that aquatic bird, the Wigeon.
Who then, hearing *palumbus* coo,
Will write an ode, without ado.
Immortalising my *new* name
To echo down the Halls of Fame?
No one! the answer's very clear.
Such change will spell the end, I fear.
Of me and mine in poetry.
Oh, curse the blighters! Woe is me!

Derek Goodwin did, however, in an accompanying letter, say: 'I would certainly not *oppose* the idea of calling it Stock Pigeon.'

This is but one of many possible changes currently under consideration. (*Contributed by JTRS*)

How fast do migrants travel? A recently published paper by Olavi Hildén and Pertti Saurola (*Ornis Fennica* 59: 140-143) includes a



164. Young Ornithologists of the Year, 1984: Helen Parr (intermediate winner), Robert Fray (senior winner) and Imogen Wade (junior winner), with Peter Holden and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Bedfordshire, December 1984 (*RSPB & Chris Sargeant*)

table giving average speed for a selection of species, based on the 200,000-odd birds ringed annually in Finland. On autumn migration, the ten relevant recoveries of Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus*, for instance, showed a rate of 8km per day, compared with 59km per day for the 100 Robins *Erithacus rubecula*. The fastest speed on autumn migration was shown by Little Stint *Calidris minuta* (112km per day). Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* and Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* (both 109km per day) and Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* (108km per day); the slowest was that for Blue Tit (noted above). These *average* speeds should not be confused with some of the high-speed recoveries which have been noted, such as a Dunlin *Calidris alpina* which travelled 1,023km in one day. These exceptional records tend, perhaps, to influence birdwatchers' view of the general speed of migration, which, from these figures, seems often to be a rather leisurely affair. For full details, consult *Ornis Fennica*. (Contributed by JTRS)

'Spring is sprung, The grass has riz; I wonder where the birdies is?' As I write, in the second half of April, most summer migrants are exceptionally scarce and many expected species are almost absent. If, as seems possible, this is not merely reflecting late arrival in an admittedly cold and late spring, but includes a serious decline in the numbers reaching Europe after the increasingly hazardous crossing of the increasingly wide Sahara, one conclusion seems essential. Moral (and, one must hope, multi-governmental) pressure must be applied without delay on all countries (particularly those bordering the Mediterranean) where migrants are trapped or shot as luxury food or for entertainment. These outmoded practices should have ceased years ago, but now they can certainly no longer be tolerated. The ICBP's 'Stop the Massacre Committee' (see *Brit. Birds* 78: 202) has never had a more vital and urgent job of education to perform, nor a better opportunity to press home its campaign. (Contributed by JTRS)

How to spend £1,000 In mid March, we were delighted to receive an airmail letter with Kenyan stamps from Nick Pike, our *Mystery Photographs Book* £1,000 winner, and to hear news of his African trip. We are delighted that Nick, who is a freelance wildlife artist, as well as being a *BB* subscriber, chose such a splendid way of spending his prize money.

Hook Head A new publication of the Irish Wildbird Conservancy, *Birds of Hook Head, Co. Wexford*, sets out in a typical 60-page bird-report format the observations particularly of migrants at this increasingly popular watch point on the southern coast of Ireland.



Copies can be obtained (£2.50 including p&p) from the compiler/author John Lovatt, 52 Grange Park Road, Raheny, Dublin 5, Republic of Ireland.

RSPB goes west A beautiful university campus is not necessarily the most practical venue for a conference, but a coach shuttle-service, ingenuity, and organisation overcame potential problems at Exeter for the RSPB Members' Weekend on 19th-21st April. With over 980 residents and hundreds more visitors, the whole event ran remarkably smoothly. The scale is amazing: 75 volunteer helpers, 39 coaches, 7,175 meals, 4,750 cups of coffee, and a whole lake of beer. After a warm-up welcome to the region by Stan Davies, the weekend got under way and into the star turn of Friday night, with Magnus Magnusson masterminding the presentation of the Iceland Saga—not much about birds, but his rich voice and super-professional delivery evoked matters Icelandic splendidly. Appropriately, *Icelandair* gave generous sponsorship for the event, as did Collins Publishers, and both had major

stands in the mini trade fair, which, with the art exhibition and sales stands, stayed busy from early morning until late each night. Whiteways gave sponsorship in the shape of a bottle of wine in each room, greatly appreciated by the members. Trevor Gunton, Marcella Hume and their 'team' are grateful for such sponsorship, and this must set the pattern for these expensive events in future. On the Saturday, James Hancock stole the show with his superbly illustrated trip around some of the world's greatest wetlands, weaving in his researches into his beloved egrets. The message was less satisfactory: even the Bharatpurs and Everglades of this world are being severely damaged, so what hope is there for the rest? We need more people with the knowledge and passion of James, who are equally willing to point the finger at the root causes of the problems in order to get something done. After Bryan Pickess showed us wildlife at Arne, some 1,000 children and their parents descended for the YOC Bird Afternoon with Tony Soper. Most of the residents wisely chose one of the 20 coaches organised for trips, some even seeing a Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*. David Houston gave a memorable evening's presentation, looking at vultures in Africa and South America: the perfect conference talk, thoroughly entertaining yet heavily spiced with the fascinating results of his painstaking research. Sunday-morning-after-the-night-before was an 'RSPB in Action' session, with Ian Prestt and his staff updating members on the Society's progress, especially in the international field and in reserve purchase and management. (Non-members please note?) Question time produced a warm round of applause for Peter Holden, who explained that YOC members often lose interest in their teens because they discover sex, and 'a large national organisation is not necessarily the body to which they will turn'. For those who stayed on, this excellent conference rounded off with a return to Iceland with Johann Sigurdsson late on Sunday night. As usual, hundreds went home with a tombola prize (the stand made £1,700 for conservation) and a lucky few won anything from binoculars to week-long or weekend holidays for two for the price of a ticket in the raffle (which made another £1,000); and all went home with happy memories of a very busy, very friendly weekend. The *BB* Mystery Photographs competition was won, with four correct answers out of five, by Tim Cleaves. (*Contributed by Rob Hume*)



Recent reports

Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp

**These are largely unchecked reports,
not authenticated records**

The dates in this report refer to April unless otherwise stated.

The month began with unsettled weather and southwesterly winds until 8th, when a high formed to the northwest, bringing cooler northwesterlies. This area of pressure moved south over England, causing the first really warm spell from 16th to 18th, until a further anticyclone, developing to the northwest, resulted in a return of cold winds from the Arctic through to about 28th. The month closed with little change.

Summer visitors and migrants

As always in April, the year list rises rapidly as most of our summer visitors put in their first appearance. This year, however, numbers of most species remained low, with the major influx still to come. **Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis* and **Pied Flycatchers** *Ficedula hypoleuca* suddenly appeared in numbers on their Cumbrian breeding grounds on 17th. A general influx of **Pied Flycatchers**, **Redstarts** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, **Whinchats** *Saxicola rubetra* and **Ring Ouzels** *Turdus torquatus* took place on the Isle of Wight on 20th. Hengistbury Head and Portland (both Dorset) had their best fall on 25th, with 85 **Redstarts**, 64 **Whinchats** and 1,500 **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* at Hengistbury Head, and 76 **Redstarts** at Portland. Further north, 5th was an exciting day on North Ronaldsay (Orkney), with eight **Black Redstarts** *Phoenicurus ochruros*, five **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita*, 21 **Redpolls** *Carduelis flammea* of the race *C. f. flammea*, about 300 **Robins** *Erithacus rubecula*, and a **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*. The following day saw a **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* on North Ronaldsay, followed by three more in Orkney, and a Shetland total of 16 from 8th. Also involved in these

movements in the Northern Isles were **Yellowhammers** *Emberiza citrinella*, rare birds there, and other finches, including a **Redpoll** of the Greenland race *C. f. rostrata* on North Ronaldsay on 12th. **Linnet** *C. cannabina* passed north through Sandwich (Kent) daily in three figures, with maxima of 838 on 10th and 1,023 on 15th.

Dorset had its earliest-ever **Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* at Christchurch on 3rd, and other notably early birds included a **Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca* at Sandwich Bay on 3rd, a **Garden Warbler** *S. borin* at Barnsley (South Yorkshire) on 5th, four **Swifts** *Apus apus* at Cley (Norfolk) on 3rd, and a **Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* in Sussex on 15th.

A total of 103 **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava* was counted in part of the Trent Valley (Nottinghamshire) on 7th, part of a widespread movement of wagtails and pipits *Anthus*, which included ten males of the blue-headed race *M. f. flava* at Sandwich on 12th, and good numbers of **Pied Wagtails** *M. alba* of the race *M. a. alba*, with, for example, 11 at Sandwich on 1st and ten at Bedford (Bedfordshire) on 11th; **Rock Pipits** *A. spinoletta* of the Scandinavian race *A. s. littoralis*, including four at Barns Ness (Lothian) at the start of the month, and of the Continental mountain race *A. s. spinoletta*, with five at Bedford on 11th; and **Meadow Pipits** *A. pratensis*, with over 900 through Sandwich on 1st and 800 at Walney (Cumbria) the next day.

Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* showed no signs of recovering their lost numbers, with flocks of 24 on the River Usk (Gwent), on 18th, and 20 at Hoveringham (Nottinghamshire) on 7th the largest reported, while one on Walney on 9th was the only record there all month, and Sandwich totalled only 22

individuals. Sandwich also drew a blank with **Nightingales**. **Sedge Warblers** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* also seem to be low again, with one only on Walney on 22nd, and a total of only nine through Sandwich. A stretch of the River Ivel at Blunham (Bedfordshire), which in recent years has held 19-23 pairs of Sedge Warblers, mustered only four singing males by early May.

Scarcer migrants

Rather fewer exotic and scarce migrants were reported than normal. Perhaps vicars no longer have large lawns, for only about ten **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* came to our notice, two of these at Hengistbury Head on 9th. A **Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* at The Needles (Isle of Wight) on 18th was followed by a series on Portland, including two on 25th, and at Saltee (Co. Wexford), while the only **Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* was on Scilly around 26th. **Serins** *Serinus serinus* arrived along the English south coast from Selsey (West Sussex) to Prawle Point (Devon), and also at Wells (Norfolk) on 20th, on which date there were two others. **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* turned up in some unusual localities, including a singing male in Chorlton Meadows (Greater Manchester) on 25th. A **Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor* on South Uist (Western Isles) on 15th was the first for that island, while Shetland had around half a dozen individuals passing through. **Dartford Warblers** *Sylvia undata* turned up in several places on the Isle of Wight—from New Forest or Brittany populations?

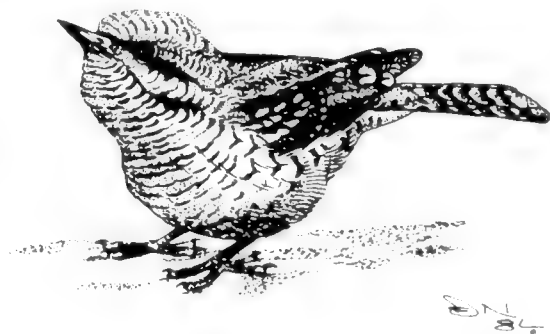
The icing on the cake

If not quite holding a monopoly, southwest England certainly cornered the market in rarities, the highlight undoubtedly being Britain and Ireland's third **Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra*, on St Mary's (Isles of Scilly) from 26th to 29th, the weekend after a male **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* had been singing on the same island from 19th to 23rd (plate 170). Scilly also boasted a female **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* from 19th to 27th, a **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* on Bryher, and a **Little Bunting** *E. pusilla* on 21st on St Mary's. Could this be the start of a double 'Scilly season', with April rivalling October on these magical islands? Close by, a Little Bunting was at Land's End (Cornwall) on 20th, and a **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* was seen to fly in off the sea at Porthgwarra (Cornwall) the same day. A few days later, its close but considerably rarer (in Britain) cousin, the **Spec-**

tacted Warbler *S. conspicillata*, popped up briefly near Land's End for one lucky observer. Farther east along the south coast, there was another **Woodchat**, at Portland on 25th, a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* at Radipole (Dorset) on 27th, and a first-year **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* at Southsea (Hampshire) from 26th March to 24th.

Farther afield, another **Subalpine Warbler** was at Spurn (Humberside) from 17th to at least 20th, and a **Woodchat Shrike** reached Co. Wexford; early in the month, an **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* performed for many along the north Norfolk coast for about a week (plates 172 & 173), finally being seen heading south along the Essex coast, and others appeared at Barnsley on 3rd and Liverpool (Merseyside) on 13th; and a **Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* on the evening of 22nd at Malltraeth, Anglesey (Gwynedd), reappeared the following evening. The Belfast (Co. Down) **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* continued to please, but the star bird across the water was a **Fan-tailed Warbler** *Cisticola juncidis* on Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) for a day. At the end of the month, there was a **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* at Wraybury (Berkshire), and, finally, an intriguing report of a **Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata* at Orpington (Kent) on 31st March.

It would perhaps be appropriate to mention here a considerable and widespread early invasion of **painted lady butterflies** *Cynthia cardui* from late March through April.



Large wading birds . . .

A **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* seen on a sea-watch at St Catherine's Point (Isle of Wight) on 18th heralded a mini-invasion of this species along the English south coast, with others at Dungeness (Kent), at least three in Devon, and two at Marazion (Cornwall), with one in southern Ireland, while a **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* performed at Bude (Cornwall) from 10th through to May (plate 175). A **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis*



falcinellus at Dungeness from 20th March had previously been seen in East Sussex and might have been a new arrival rather than one of the established Kent duo. Single **Cranes** *Grus grus* enlivened the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire/Norfolk) on 20th and 21st, and—perhaps the same bird—at Cley, also on 21st, and one on 25th soaring over Chorlton Meadows before heading off northwest. The Coniston Cold (West Yorkshire) **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* was still present; much rarer was the immaculate **Black Stork** *C. nigra* seen at South Huish (Devon) on 27th, and refound in the lower Erme Valley on 28th and into May, to the delight of many birders.

... and not so large

Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* graced Looe (Cornwall) and Radipole at either end of the month. Two **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* from 28th into May were unusual visitors to Hanningfield Reservoir (Essex), while the same locality had a male **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* on 18th, and a good passage of **Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* on 15th and 17th, with 80 and 100 respectively. The Dartford (Kent) **Sociable Plover** *Cheltusia gregaria* remained until 17th (plate 169). A **Lesser Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was on the Hayle Estuary (Cornwall) mid month, and



165-167. Little Gulls *Larus minutus*, Merseyside, April 1985 (Steve Young)

Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus* passed through Flookburgh (Cumbria) on 20th, and Scilly, where there were two on 27th. A wandering **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedipnemus* visited Cley on 20th.

A summer-plumaged **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* was seen at Stanton Harcourt (Oxfordshire) on 20th and 21st, when it moved to Farmoor Reservoir for a few days. Where are all the other American waders presumably still on this side of the Atlantic? The only others reported were **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* on The Fleet (Dorset), and in summer plumage at Sandwich on 17th and 22nd.

The more regular migrant waders appeared on cue, with 22 **Little Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius dubius* at seven sites in Nottinghamshire in the first week; and a steady but unspectacular passage of **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* inland and on the coast, with 47 at Sandwich on 20th and 40 or more on Scilly on 27th.

Gulls, terns and skuas

Some ten **Iceland Gulls** *Larus glaucoideus* were reported, almost as numerous as at any time during the winter, including an adult at Seaforth (Merseyside) throughout (plate 174), and a second-summer individual in Dublin. Small numbers of **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* were mainly in the west as usual, including a pair displaying at Blackpill (West Glamorgan) on 6th (where are they now?), while a first-winter bird at Musselburgh (Lothian) from 7th to at least 13th was also noteworthy. A **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* put in a brief appearance at Sandymount (Co. Dublin), and high numbers of **Little Gulls** *L. minutus* were present throughout at Seaforth (plates 165-167).



168. Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*, Merseyside, April 1985 (Steve Young)

peaking at 350 on 24th. A **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* graced the same place from 20th to 26th (plate 168). Towards the month end, there was a spectacular movement of **Arctic Terns** *Sterna paradisaea* through eastern England, with, on 28th, up to 240 at Grafham Water (Cambridgeshire), over 140 at Stewartby (Bedfordshire) and 47 at Hanningfield, although large numbers occurred from the previous day through into May. The 28th also saw 472 **Sandwich Terns** *S. sandwichensis* and 920 **Herring Gulls** *L. argentatus* north past Sandwich. During snow flurries on 27th, 32 **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* headed southwest over Hilton (Cambridgeshire), and over 100 in the same direction over Bedford, all adults.

The first **Great Skuas** *Stercorarius skua* returned later than usual to Orkney and Shetland, on 3rd and 4th respectively. Four passed Walney on 11th, along with five **Arctic Skuas** *S. parasiticus*, and the first **Pomarine Skua** *S. pomarinus* at Portland was noted on 27th.

Other water birds

A drake **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* was in Gosford Bay (Lothian) late in March, and another appeared close inshore at St Just (Cornwall) in April. Inland, a **Velvet Scoter** *M. fusca* remained at Hanningfield to 8th, after three there in March. A drake **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* at Loch Fleet (Highland) is expected; less so a female in Lerwick Harbour (Shetland) in the last week of April. We periodically report the continued presence of long-staying rarities, so it is perhaps appropriate to report the absence of one old friend: the South Uist **Steller's Eider** *Polysticta stelleri*, which has boosted many a life list, has not been seen now since 15th July 1984. South Uist will, however, no

doubt continue to attract vagrant birders to tick the **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* still there this month.

A drake **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* remained on Norby Loch (Shetland) all month, as did a **Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus columbianus* on Loch Spiggie (Shetland), a great local rarity. Two drake **Mandarins** *Aix galericulata* on Papa Westray (Orkney) on 6th provided only the second Orkney record, and a **Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis* at Prawle was the first for that locality. Two single **Brent Geese** *Branta bernicla* of the dark-bellied race *B. b. bernicla* in the Dublin area were also excellent 'local birds' (plate 171).

Raptors

The returning warden to Rathlin Island (Co. Antrim) was greeted by first-winter **White-tailed Haliaeetus albicilla** and **Golden Eagles** *Aquila chrysaetos*, the latter staying for over a week. Southern vagrants were a **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco tinnunculus* through Dungeness on 20th, and **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* at Spurn on 19th and Prawle on 27th, while migrant **Red Kites** *M. milvus* passed over Sandwich on 13th and Horsey (Norfolk) on 15th. A wide scatter of **Hobbies** *F. subbuteo* included three on 20th, on which date an **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* flew over Whinell Tarn (Cumbria), one of about a dozen reported including two each at Hanningfield Reservoir, and in Cumbria and Buckinghamshire. A female/immature **Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* on Colonsay, Inner Hebrides (Strathclyde) on 18th had wandered farther than usual; and **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* were seen at Holme (Norfolk) on 4th and on West Mainland (Orkney) on 5th. Remaining in the Northern Isles, at least two **Snowy Owls** *Nyctea scandiaca* were frequenting Fetlar (Shetland).

Latest news

After a **Daurian Starling** *Sturnus sturninus* on Fair Isle in early May, another potential addition to the British and Irish list turned up in June: a first-summer female **Oriental Cuckoo** *Cuculus saturatus* which stayed at least a week after being trapped at Spurn on 2nd. Three **Rose-coloured Starlings** *S. roseus*, at Fair Isle and elsewhere in Shetland, and **Needle-tailed Swift** *Hirundapus caudacutus* at Fairburn Ings (North Yorkshire) in late May. Single **Marsh Warblers** *Acrocephalus palustris* at Cley and Holme in June were only the third and fourth Norfolk records.



169. Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria*, Kent, March 1985 (David M. Coltridge)



170. Male Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*, Scilly, April 1985 (John Herriott)

171. Brent Geese *Branta bernicla*, dark-bellied *B. b. bernicla* with pale-bellied *B. b. hrota*, Co. Dublin, March 1985 (P. Kelly)





172 & 173. Above, Alpine Swift *Apus melba*.
Norfolk, March 1985 (*David M. Cottridge*)

174. Right, adult Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*. Merseyside, April 1985 (*Steve Young*)



175. Below, Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*.
Cornwall, April 1985 (*Graham Sutton*)



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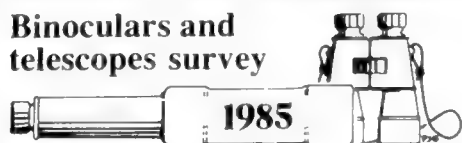
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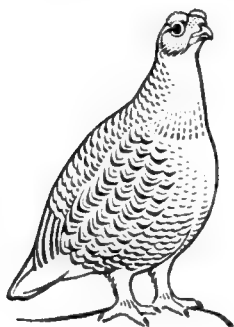
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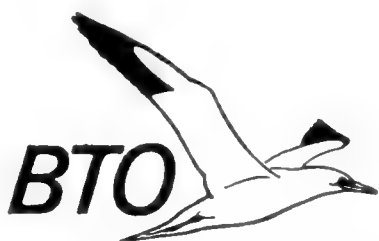
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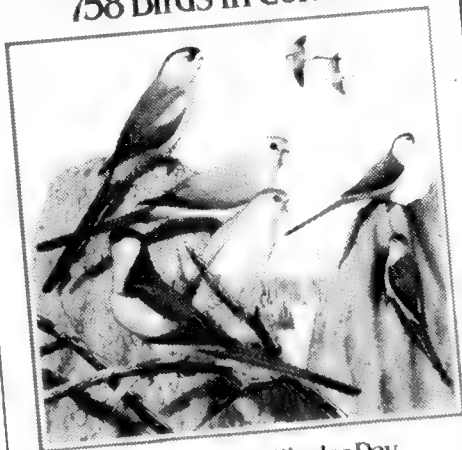
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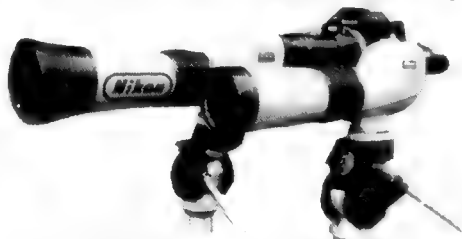


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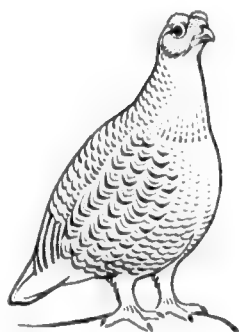
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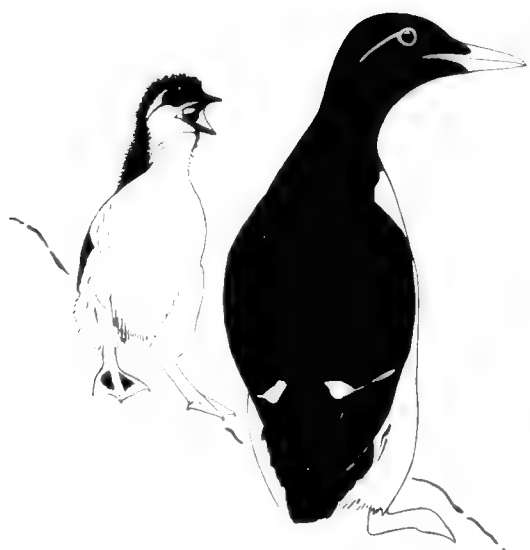
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Appearance and behaviour of immature Guillemots and Razorbills at sea

P. Hope Jones and E. I. S. Rees

The young of both Guillemot *Uria aalge* and Razorbill *Alca torda* have an intermediately precocial pattern of development (Sealy 1972). That is, the juvenile is led out to sea by one adult, usually the male parent (Birkhead 1984), when its wing development is sufficient for fluttering down from the cliff and diving, but when it has reached only one-third to one-half of the adult weight (Birkhead 1977). Although the departure of the juveniles from the colonies has been described by several authors (e.g. Greenwood 1964), very little has been recorded about their life over the next few months. The departure has often been referred to as fledging, though Burger (1980) considered that the term fledging should be reserved for the stage when they actually fly and become independent of the adult. The primaries, secondaries and tail feathers are grown for the first time during the post-juvenile moult of wing-coverts and body feathers in July to October: the first proper flight is therefore achieved with the development of first-winter plumage. This paper describes some aspects of the appearance and behaviour of these immature auks seen at sea off western Britain in the period between early July and mid September, when the adults undergo their complete moult to winter plumage. Throughout this paper, the word 'adult' refers to individuals at least 12 months of age (i.e. in their first summer or older).

A series of cruises was made, mainly in the Irish Sea, during 1979-83 with the main aim of studying the distribution and abundance of the auks during the late summer, when the whole population is flightless. Noting appearances and behaviour was supplementary to the primary objectives, but the paucity of knowledge prompts us to publish data that are often more anecdotal than systematic. Most of the data presented here were gathered in 1983, but additional observations extending back to the early 1970s have also been drawn upon.

Virtually all the observations were made from ships. The influence of the observer's relatively massive platform cannot, therefore, be ruled out; nor was it possible to observe birds for more than a few minutes, even when the ships were stationary. Reaction varied from near panic to apparent indifference. Occasional birds were seen actively to approach the stationary or slow-moving research vessels and to dive under them. Trawler-following by

Guillemots in the Irish Sea has been reported by Hillis (1973) and Watson (1981). It seems that, particularly in areas where the birds are used to ships, and when the observer is on a vessel not moving too fast or throwing up a big bow wave, the behaviour is likely to be fairly normal. In the channels into the Mersey, we have seen auks apparently unconcerned by the passing of large ships. By contrast, in more remote localities off the west of Scotland, they seem to react at longer ranges.

Distinguishing juveniles and first-winters from adults

Throughout July, there was normally no problem in distinguishing the juvenile Guillemots at ranges up to 300m and beyond (with 10× binoculars). The main criteria were their small size, relative to the adults, which they usually closely accompanied, and their high-pitched calls. The call is so distinctive and penetrating that, when light and sea conditions make birds on the water inconspicuous, the juveniles are often detected from their calls before being spotted. Subsidiary distinguishing features stem from their behaviour and head colour. Through August, juvenile Guillemots continued to be distinguishable by the same four criteria, but by mid August juvenile Razorbills were accompanying their apparent guardians less closely or joining the parties of adults (first-summer and older) so that they became less obvious in the time available for scrutiny from moving ships. By mid September, the immatures of both species (then mainly in full first-winter plumage) had grown to be almost as big as the adults. Both birds of such couples were almost always in full winter plumage, so that, although on behavioural grounds it was often suspected that couples seen together were a first-winter and its guardian, they could not certainly be ascribed as such. When identified by call, the September first-winter Guillemots looked sleeker than the fuller-shaped adults, with no flank streaks; they also looked distinctly whiter about the head, though by no

Table 1. Group size of Irish Sea Guillemots *Uria aalge*, where the two age-classes for all individuals were firmly established, July-August 1983

Groups larger than nine may be under-represented because of the need for rapid recording as the ship moved past; there was little time for careful separation into age-classes, and many larger groups were separated only by species; those in the table were 11 and 26 (each with one juvenile) and 16 (with two juveniles).

No. of accom- panying adults	Number of juveniles			
	1	2	3	4
1	377 (75%)	0	0	0
2	67 (13%)	24 (55%)	0	0
3	32 (6%)	8 (18%)	3	0
4	11 (2%)	4 (9%)	0	1
5	7 (1%)	3 (7%)	1	0
6	4 (1%)	1 (2%)	0	0
7	3	1 (2%)	0	0
8	3	0	0	0
9	0	2 (3%)	0	0
>9	2	1 (2%)	0	0
Total no. of records	506	44	4	1

means all of them showed white on the nape. (Flank streaks on adult Guillemots in the Irish Sea varied from distinctly dark to barely visible.)

Group size

During at least the first month after the time they would have left the colonies, the juveniles of both species were usually found accompanied by only one adult. Tables 1 and 2 show numbers of juveniles and adults where the two age classes for all individuals were firmly established. September records have been omitted owing to the difficulties of positive age diagnosis in that month. The proportions were not different between July and August, so data for the two months have been combined.

For 555 groups containing juvenile Guillemots, 68% comprised just one juvenile and one adult, whereas, for 211 groups of Razorbills, the equivalent proportion was higher, at 84%, though the difference between the species was not significant. Often, when more than one adult was grouped with a juvenile, it was obvious which of the adults was the real guardian, from the relative proximity of the two adults to the juvenile. In areas where there were large numbers of adults, the adult/juvenile pairs tended to swim slightly apart from the rafts of adults.

Moult and head plumage

Nestling Guillemots have completely dark heads in the down plumage; this is replaced by juvenile feathering which is dark over the crown and nape but white on the chin and throat. They depart from the colonies in this juvenile plumage. In the Irish Sea, during the summer of 1983, it became obvious that the juvenile plumage was variable, and we classified the head plumage into three categories (fig. 1). By September, all the identified immatures were in first-winter plumage, and were very similar to the winter adults, and presumably, in many cases, indistinguishable from them.



Fig. 1. Categories of head plumage shown by juvenile and first-winter Guillemots *Uria aalge*: left, dark; centre, intermediate; right, white

During the period from mid July to mid September, adult Guillemots are progressing through their complete moult to winter plumage (Birkhead & Taylor 1977). Swennen (1977) showed, with captive birds, that this moult becomes progressively later in the summer with the increasing age of the birds, loss of primaries and secondaries starting in mid June for first-summers and in late July for third-summers. In the Irish Sea, first signs of wing moult were noted on 21st July on birds not with juveniles, but those accompanying juveniles rarely seemed to flap their wings, and we have no dates for commencement of wing moult in this group. Individuals with

traces of winter-like plumage in the head feathering can be seen at any time of the summer; most of these may be sexually immature (first- to fourth-summers), though one case is known of such a bird incubating an egg (PHJ personal observation). The following categories of head plumage were used: (1) full summer plumage, without any trace of white visible on a dark head; (2) full winter plumage; and two intermediate categories: (3) s/w, closer to summer than winter, and (4) w/s for the converse. Razorbills do not seem to have been so well studied, but, for convenience, we classified them according to the same criteria.

Table 2. Group size of Irish Sea Razorbills *Alca torda*, where the two age-classes for all individuals were firmly established, July and August 1983

No groups over 8 included juveniles, but see caveat under table 1

No. of accom- panying adults	Number of juveniles		
	1	2	3
1	177 (88%)	0	0
2	14 (7%)	8	0
3	3 (1%)	0	2
4	5 (2%)	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	1	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	1	0	0
>8	0	0	0
Total no. of records	201	8	2

Head-plumage patterns for juveniles/first-winters of these species are shown, according to date, in table 3. Although suggesting that the dark phase develops by post-juvenile moult through intermediate to white in Guillemots, there remains the possibility that juveniles do not show sequential changes, but remain in one category until they moult through to first-winter plumage. Variability in the throat plumage of juvenile auks has been recorded by Gaston & Nettleship (1981) for Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia*, whilst Hudson (1984) suggested the possibility of genetic control of this factor in the case of the Razorbill. Hudson (1984) also recorded that just over half of a sample of 51 juvenile Razorbills from Skomer had white throats; this proportion is similar to our early August sample from a part of St George's Channel to which the Dyfed birds may go, but an earlier sample from farther north included more than three-quarters with dark faces.

For adult Guillemots, there is an indication that those accompanying juveniles are in general slower in their moult than those not so occupied: by late August, only 4% of the former were in full winter plumage, compared with 40% of the latter. Various points need clarification, in particular the extent to which the head colour of the juveniles—in different sub-populations—is part of a post-juvenile moult that is more or less advanced at the time they go to sea.

A difference in upperpart coloration between juvenile Guillemots and their guardians was noted in a few cases. In late July, the juvenile tended to be the darker (presumably an adult's upperparts would have faded since



Table 3. Head patterns of juvenile and first-winter Guillemots *Uria aalge* and Razorbills *Alca torda*, Irish Sea, in four periods in autumn, 1983

Modal values are underlined

	18-28 July	2-11 Aug.	24-26 Aug.	12-17 Sept.
GUILLEMOT				
Number	109	126	16	16
% dark	23	12	0	0
% intermediate	<u>73</u>	<u>73</u>	31	0
% white	4	15	<u>69</u>	<u>100</u>
RAZORBILL				
Number	36	44	2	1
% dark	<u>81</u>	<u>52</u>	(50)	0
% intermediate	19	48	(50)	0
% white	0	0	0	(100)

the moult to summer plumage), and this difference was reversed by mid September, when the adults were well into their moult to winter plumage. The difference was, however, often slight, and not safely noted except under the best possible light conditions.

Call and behavioural traits

The calls of the juvenile Guillemots were usually disyllabic, with the accent on the first syllable, and often repeated several times. There was considerable individual variation: ‘clee-oo’, ‘pree-pree’, ‘quee-roo’, ‘pee-arr’, and so on, with occasional trisyllabic calls, noted as ‘wee-ree-oo’ and ‘ker-wee-oo’, with the accent on the middle syllable. These calls have been heard until the third week of September, but we have spent little time at sea in late September. Strangely, no calls were heard which could unequivocally be ascribed to juvenile Razorbills.

At sea, the juveniles stayed close to their accompanying adults, Guillemots often being within 1m, but Razorbills—though still within a few metres—tended not to be in quite such close company. Where Guillemots of a presumed adult/juvenile couple were seen to surface some distance apart, they would quickly move towards each other, usually with much calling on the part of both birds. The juvenile call is audible to the human ear over at least 300m in typical conditions of ship- and sea-noise. In calm conditions, the calls have been heard by one of us (EISR), in the bays of southwestern Ireland, at ranges over 1 km. The call is obviously vital for the maintenance of contact between the juvenile and its guardian, particularly when the pair may be separated at night or in rough weather, and when the birds surface some distance apart after a dive.

A juvenile could often be recognised, even when seen only in silhouette, by its attitude, swimming very close to the bird in front, with a hunched appearance (fig. 2), which suggested a begging or submissive posture.

Feeding of a juvenile by an adult has been observed on several occasions

176-178. Head pattern of auks moulting from down to juvenile plumage: top, Guillemot *Uria aalge* ‘intermediate’; centre, Guillemot ‘white’; bottom, Razorbill *Alca torda* ‘dark’. Photographs all taken at breeding colony Gwynedd, June 1984 (*P. Hope Jones*)



Fig. 2. Appearance of juvenile Guillemot *Uria aalge* following its adult guardian

in the case of Guillemots, and twice in Razorbills. In all cases, the adult passed small fish to the juvenile without any obvious behavioural preliminaries, except contact calling if they were apart. It was not possible to identify the fish species. In addition to the occasions when food was actually seen being passed, there were frequently other occasions when the adults were seen carrying a fish but it was not clear whether it was passed to the young or was swallowed. On some occasions, the adults dived while holding the fish and emerged without it. Active feeding of the juveniles was observed in 1983 between late July and late August; we spent less time at sea in September that year, but have previously observed supplemental feeding on dates up to mid September in Liverpool Bay. The ending of the period of dependence has been assumed to coincide with the end of the flightless period, but this has yet to be confirmed. Indeed, during auk movements in late September at Point Lynas, Anglesey, a proportion seemed to fly past in twos, with a smaller bird accompanying a larger one.

No aggression was noticed between any individuals, but there was not much social interaction of any kind except between the juveniles and their guardians. The line-abreast type of display (Birkhead, in Cramp *et al.* 1985) is not restricted to the breeding season and the proximity of the colonies. Throughout July and August, adults are quite often seen in these formations in fine weather. On two occasions in September, parties of seven and 14 Guillemots (the second group including four definite first-winters) were seen to hold station for a minute or so in line abreast. Young Guillemots can obviously be introduced to this display long before they attain adult plumage. Patently, the normal behaviour of both species needs competent description and analysis at this critical period of the year.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the masters and crews of the various ships, in particular the research vessel *Prince Madog*, who facilitated our observations. We also thank Dr T. R. Birkhead for comments on an early draft of this paper.

Summary

Juvenile and first-winter Guillemots *Uria aalge* in the Irish Sea were distinguishable from adults (first-summers and older) often up to early September, mainly by their small size and distinctive calls, though often by behaviour and head colour; juvenile and first-winter Razorbills *Alca torda* were distinguishable mainly on size and behaviour. Most juveniles of both species were accompanied by one adult, though small numbers were in mixed-age groups. Further clarification is needed on the appearance of juveniles and the post-juvenile moult of both species, and on the calls of juvenile Razorbills.

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Seventy-five years ago...

'A few years ago the continued existence of the Kite (*Milvus iclinus*) as a British species seemed doomed. The bird (except for a rare straggler at long intervals) was, and indeed still is, confined to Wales, and in 1905 the total number surviving was believed to be only five. Those who had up to that time done their best to keep the Kites alive were fain to admit that their doom seem sealed, and some even suggested that eggs should be imported from the Continent and placed in the nests of Buzzards! Had this been done, and had the experiment been successful, it need hardly be pointed out that the Kite as an indigenous species would have immediately been lost, and been replaced by an introduced bird. Fortunately, in 1905, Mr E. G. B. Meade-Waldo took up the duty of protecting the Kites on behalf of the British Ornithologists' Club, and the result of five years of unremitting care, and the expenditure of much money, has been that the British Kite, if not now safe, is at all events so far increased in numbers that its extinction is unlikely . . . Thus in five years the number of Kites has been raised from five to well over twenty.

It is painful to have to admit that this result has only been achieved by force. That is to say, the nests have been watched night and day to prevent their being robbed by the collector of rare British eggs or his agent. The extinction of any creature in any area is a deplorable loss to science, yet many of those who would not hesitate to jeopardise the existence of any rare British breeding-bird by taking its eggs have the audacity to call themselves scientific, and it has become necessary for those who take a more correct view to spend their time and money in protecting ornithology from "ornithologists"!

The collecting of "British taken" eggs is a mania, and it can be called nothing else, which is an undoubted and dangerous menace to the science of ornithology. H. F. WITHERBY' (*Brit. Birds* 4: 84-85; August 1910)

Mystery photographs

104 Last month's mystery bird was a tern, photographed by Dr R. J. Chandler in Cornwall in August 1983 (plate 162, repeated here as 179). It looks a delicate, compact bird; the tail is grey, with white outer feathers, and has only a slight notch, rather than a fork; the plumage also is essentially greyish, with a dark 'saddle'. All these features indicate that it is a marsh tern *Chlidonias*, rather than a sea tern *Sterna*. Before making a specific identification, however, it is a good idea to age the bird: its dark saddle (slightly vermiculated paler), its dark carpal bar and, particularly, its neat, pristine plumage all indicate that it is a juvenile.

Three marsh terns have to be considered: Whiskered *C. hybridus*, Black *C. niger* and White-winged Black *C. leucopterus*. Whiskered Tern can quickly be eliminated: it is larger and bulkier than the other two, with a proportionally



179. Juvenile Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*, Cornwall, August 1983 (R. J. Chandler)

180. Juvenile White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* moulting to first-winter plumage, Dorset, September 1982 (P. Vines)





181. Juvenile Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*, Norfolk, August 1979 (R. J. Chandler)



182. Juvenile White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* moulting to first-winter plumage. Dorset, September 1982 (P. Vines)

shorter and stubbier bill (although males have longer bills than females, with no overlap between the two), broader wings, proportionally shorter tail (with a deeper notch), and paler plumage more like a sea tern. Juvenile Whiskeredes also have dark saddles, but these are moulted soon after fledging, so that species is predominantly grey-backed by early autumn, although some brown scapular feathers are often retained.

We have to choose, therefore, between Black Tern and White-winged

Black Tern; but which is it? On first glance, it appears to show a contrasting dark saddle and a white rump, characters one normally associates with White-winged Black, but, unfortunately, it is not possible to see one of the key identification features: the presence or absence of a shoulder patch (plates 181 and 182 show this feature well, along with the slightly whiter underwing of White-winged Black). We must turn, therefore, to other characters to clinch the identification. Its wings, although grey, are not especially pale, and there is a strong dark carpal bar along the front of the wing; the mantle is not as clear-cut or as contrasting as on most juvenile White-winged Blacks; its rump, although white on the sides, is distinctly grey down the middle; its bill is rather long and pointed; the black on the head is solid and rather extensive, and, although marginal, the wings look rather long and pointed. All these features indicate conclusively that our mystery bird is a juvenile Black Tern.

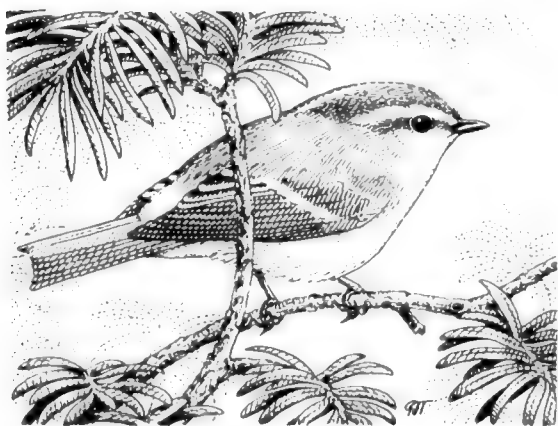
It is, however, rather a contrasty individual, and it should be borne in mind that juvenile Black Terns vary in plumage tone and that their appearance also varies according to light conditions. Some may appear rather whiter on the rump and have a more contrasting upperpart pattern than those illustrated in the standard field guides. Conversely, some juvenile White-winged Blacks do not look so strikingly dark-saddled as many observers seem to expect. Later in the autumn in particular, the mantle may fade slightly, and the appearance of the first grey winter feathers will make the mantle look generally paler and less contrasting when viewed at a distance (e.g. see plate 180, showing a late September individual). Finders of White-winged Black Terns should also bear in mind the remote possibility of hybrid Black \times White-winged Black Terns. Birds showing mixed characters of the two species have been recorded in Avon in 1978 and 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 223-225; 75: 579-580). The 1978 individual showed a puzzling combination of plumage characters, with the dark saddle, pale wings and white rump of a White-winged Black, but its structure and shoulder patch indicated that at least one of its parents must have been a Black Tern.

KEITH VINICOMBE

183. Mystery photograph 105. Identify the species. Answer next month



Pallas's Warblers and other migrants in Britain and Ireland in October 1982



D. H. Howey and M. Bell

During the period 10th-12th October 1982, the east coast of Britain experienced an impressive influx of Siberian vagrants and European passerines. The numbers were so huge that the apt term 'megadrift' was coined to describe it, for not since the 1950s and early 1960s had such a large influx occurred along the eastern coastline. Migrants were noted increasingly from Norfolk northwards, with peak numbers being recorded in southeastern Scotland and northeastern England.

To understand this movement, it is necessary not only to examine the weather conditions prevalent at that time, but also first to analyse the weather patterns over Eurasia which resulted in many Siberian vagrants moving into northwestern Europe and becoming part of the Fenno-Scandia movement.

Pallas's Warblers in Britain

The most remarkable happening of all was the unprecedented number of Pallas's Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus* that occurred in Great Britain. Prior to 1958, there were only three British records of this species, and influxes of 18 in 1968, 29 in 1975 and 33 in 1981 were considered remarkable at the time (Sharrock 1976; Rogers *et al.* 1983). The autumn 1982 total of at least 127 can only be described as phenomenal, compared with the grand total of 181 prior to that year. The influx was unusual not only because of the high numbers, but also as it was both farther north and earlier than previous ones. For example, Shetland (including Fair Isle) had recorded only eight individuals prior to 1982, but achieved a total of 29 in 1982. Studies of Pallas's Warbler records during 1958-72 (Sharrock & Sharrock 1976) and for 1974 and 1975 (Baker 1977) both showed that the main influxes occurred after October 15th. This pattern was maintained in 1981, but the 1982 influx was at least four days earlier than previously experienced.

In 1982, the first British arrival was recorded on Fair Isle on 6th October. The main arrival, however, was around 11th, and was centred particularly

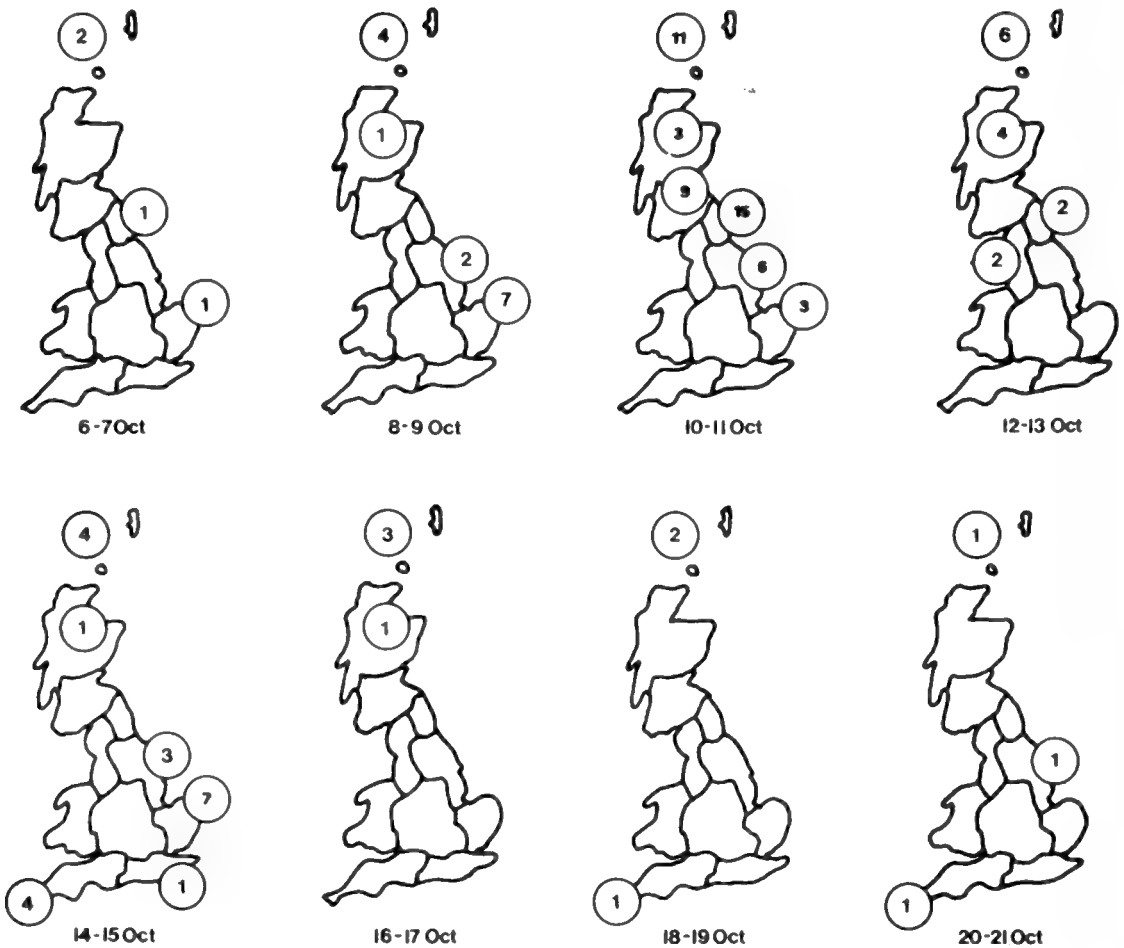


Fig. 1. Regional distribution by two-day periods of Pallas's Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus* in Britain in October 1982

on Shetland, southeastern Scotland and northeastern England. A possible second influx occurred around 15th October, centred this time on Norfolk, although Pallas's Warblers were still being recorded in Orkney and Shetland at this time. Some also appeared in southwestern England around 15th October, possibly as a result of onward filtration. None, however, was recorded in Ireland, where the only record was as long ago as 1968 (Sharrock & Preston 1969). The daily totals of Pallas's Warblers recorded in Britain (divided into 11 regions) are given in table 1, with the data for the period 6th-21st October shown pictorially in fig. 1.

Other West European records

The records of Pallas's Warblers in Finland, the Estonian SSR, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands during the autumn of 1982 are summarised in table 2. Although the individual numbers were not as high as those in Britain, the Continental total was substantial, with some record national totals.

The main arrival in Finland appears to have been around 3rd-7th October, following the first on 29th September. In Sweden, the recorded dates are much more scattered, and no clear picture emerges. It is, however, noteworthy that the first record (on 1st October) came from the northernmost point of the Gulf of Bothnia. The Norwegian records (11 of

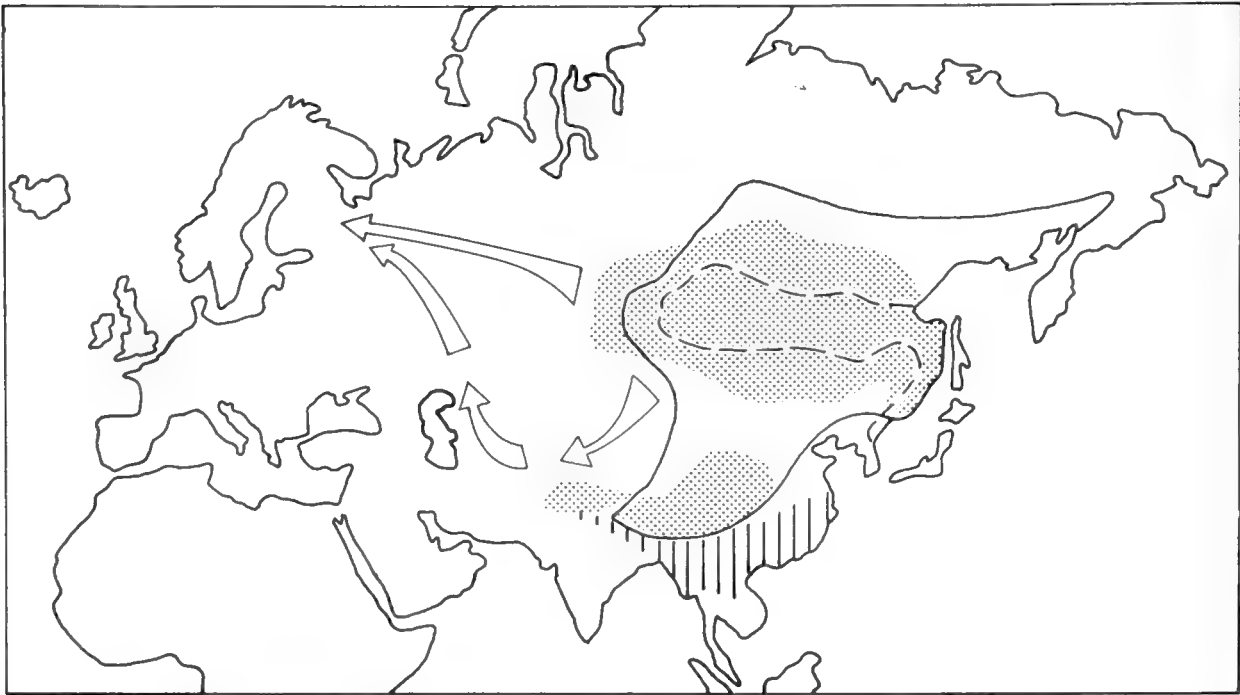
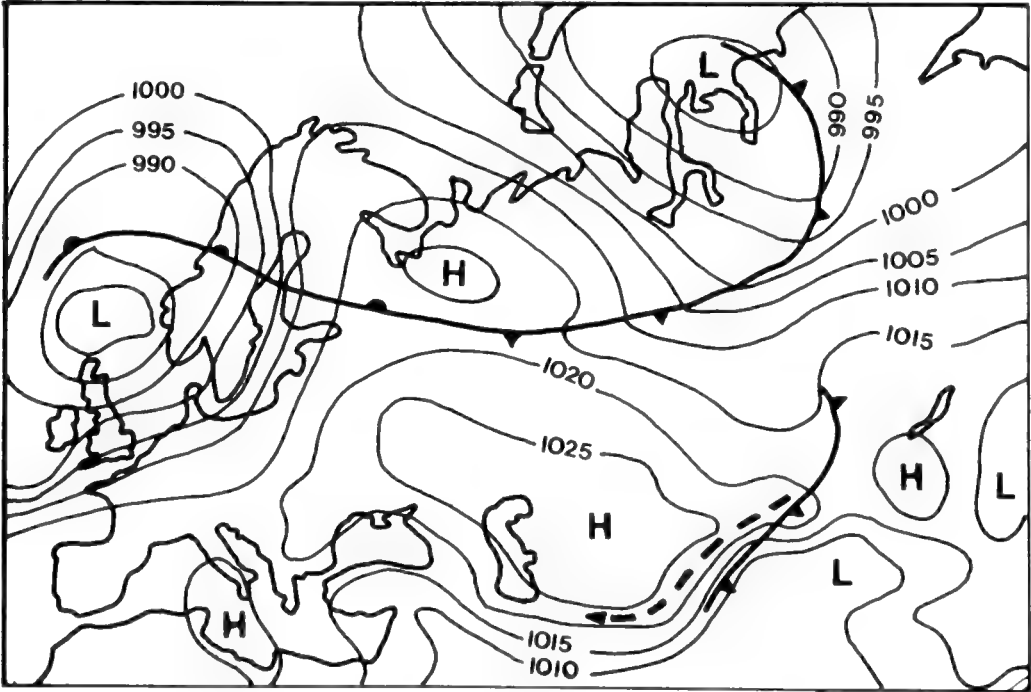


Fig. 2. Breeding range (dotted) and wintering range (vertical lines) of Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* together with the breeding ranges only of Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* (full line) and Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi* (broken line) (after King *et al.* 1975; Harrison 1982; Mead 1983). The arrows indicate the two routes suggested as those used by Pallas's Warblers appearing in Western Europe in October 1982

appear to match many of the facts surrounding the influx of Pallas's Warblers in October 1982. From the breeding and wintering ranges of Pallas's Warbler (fig. 2), it can be seen that, if birds from the western end of the breeding range were to migrate on the reciprocal of the direction of their winter quarters, they would appear in Europe. Reverse migration theory has been applied particularly to juveniles, and again this accords with the

Fig. 3. Synoptic chart for 00.00 hours on 21st September 1982. The dotted arrow indicates the route suggested as that followed by Pallas's Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus*



fact that all the Pallas's Warblers ringed in Britain in October 1982 for which we have details were juveniles.

Baker (1977) queried Rabøl's theory and concluded that the degree of westward displacement of Siberian migrants is largely dependent on the size and reach of anticyclones over the central USSR. He further concluded that, in years in which such anticyclones remained too small to have any effect, or moved quickly out of the area, there would be little if any westward displacement. Certainly, in the years which he investigated, this was probably true, with the anticyclones being centred at the southern edge of the West Siberian Plain. An initial study of the synoptic charts for the period prior to the 1982 influx of Pallas's Warblers to Western Europe showed no such anticyclone. Other conditions prevailing during the periods 21st-28th September and 2nd-5th October would, however, have been ideal for drifting birds out of southern Siberia into Western Europe.

Table 2. Distribution of Pallas's Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus* in Western Europe in September and October 1982

	Finland	Estonian SSR	Sweden	Norway	Denmark	Netherlands
TOTALS PRIOR TO 1982	92	5	65	—	19	13
1982						
SEPT						
29	2					
30	1					
OCT						
1	3		1			
2	1					
3	5		2			
4			1			
5	4		1			
6	7		3			
7	3		2			
8			3	1		
9				3	3	
10	2		9	2	3	
11		1	2	3		
12	3		4	1	2	
13	4					
14	1		2	1		
15		1	1		2	1
16	1		1	1		1
17	1	1	2	1	1	
18						
19						
20						
21			1			
22	2		5		2	
23			3		1	
24			4			
25	2					
26						
27			1		1	
1982 TOTAL	43	3	48	13	16	2

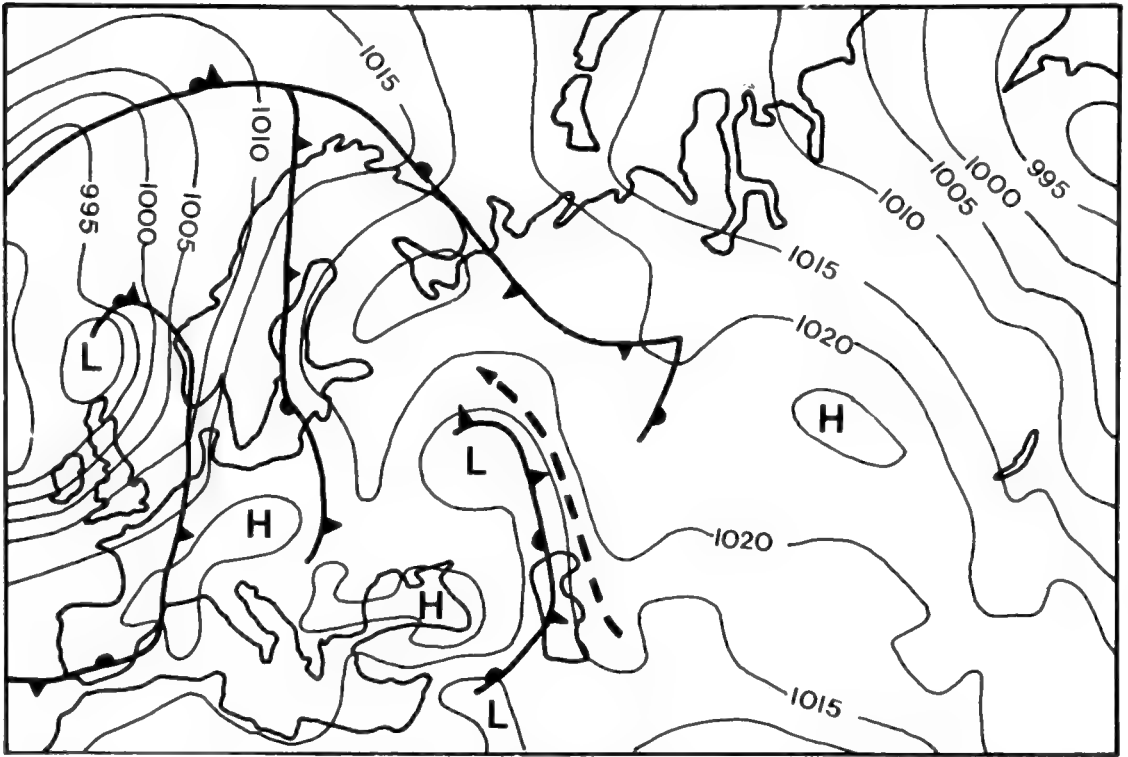


Fig. 4. Synoptic chart for 00.00 hours on 28th September 1982. The dotted arrow indicates the route suggested as that used by Pallas's Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus*

Weather conditions in the USSR in late September and early October 1982

In normal years, an area of high pressure establishes itself over the USSR by November. The year 1982 was exceptional, in that a high-pressure area was already established by mid September (with a strong anticyclone extending from north of the Black Sea to northwest Mongolia), although this was farther south than normal and was disturbed by cyclonic activity.

On 19th and 20th September, a shallow depression (with its associated fronts bringing fog, rain and hail) moved eastwards from the Caspian Sea towards Lake Baikal and slowly filled. By 21st, the anticyclone had begun to re-establish itself, but there was now a corridor of strong winds of 15 m/s (30 knots) flowing eastwards out of Mongolia towards the Caspian Sea (fig. 3). This anticyclonic airflow, although weakening, remained until 28th-29th September.

The westerly movement of several species in association with the easterly airflow on the southern flank of such anticyclones has been quoted by both Baker (1977) and Elkins (1983). We contend that some Pallas's Warblers actively moved with this easterly flow (although it was farther south than normal), from which they were unwilling to depart. Such birds would have been diverted northwestwards as the airflow itself was diverted in that direction by a secondary mean low (and its frontal system) which stretched from the Caspian Sea to Moscow on 27th-28th September (fig. 4).

On 29th-30th September, another depression formed over the West Siberian Plain and moved eastwards to Lake Baikal. A further depression formed to the north of the Caspian Sea and moved north and east, deepening as it did so. By 5th October, a depression (including its

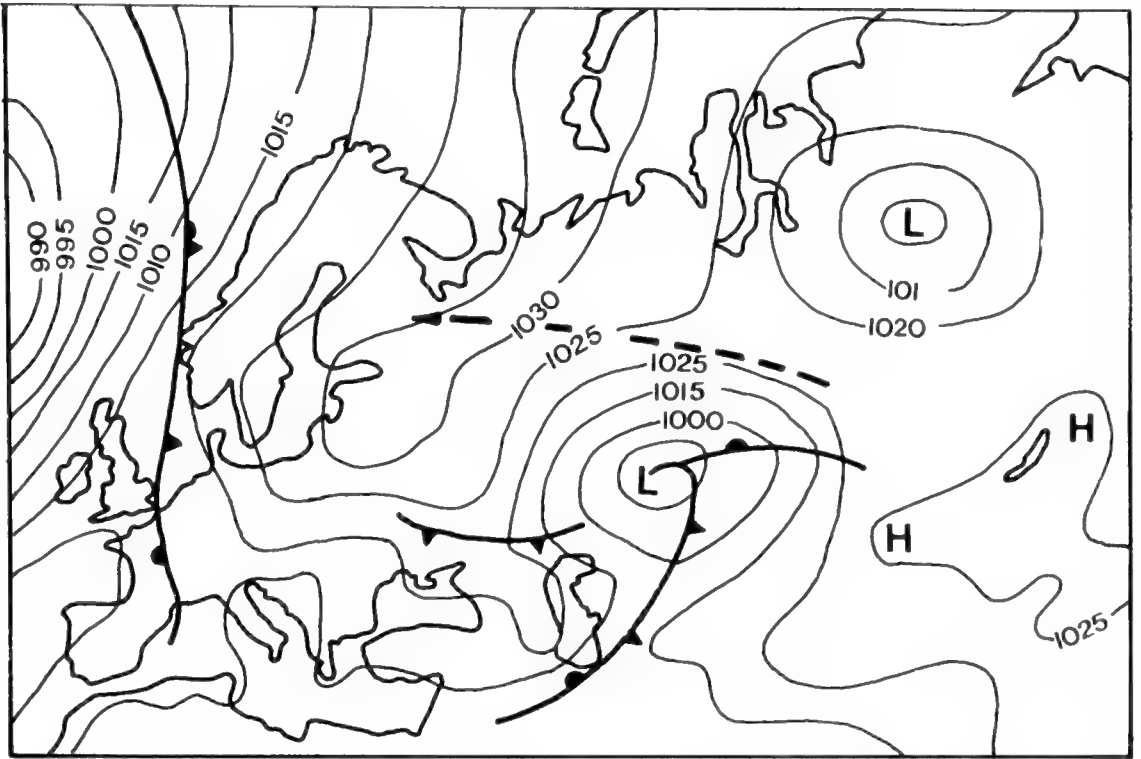


Fig. 5. Synoptic chart for 00.00 hours on 3rd October 1982. The dotted arrow indicates the route suggested as that used by Pallas's Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus*

secondary mean low) extended from Lake Baikal to the Urals. The situation at 00.00 hours on 3rd October is shown in fig. 5, when easterly winds to the north of the frontal system reached 10 m/s (20 knots).

Conditions generally during the period 2nd-5th October appear to have been ideal for drifting birds out of southern Siberia into Western Europe, although they could clearly not have been instrumental in the arrival of birds in Sweden as early as 29th September.

Calculations we have performed based upon the formulae for migratory range, developed by Pennycuik (1969), showed that the weather conditions prevailing over the Western USSR around 3rd October could indeed have been responsible for the major influx of Pallas's Warblers in Britain around 11th October. Our calculations also showed that the weather conditions prevailing during the period 21st-29th September could equally have been responsible for the earlier influx of Pallas's Warblers in Western Europe from 29th September and in Britain on 6th October.

On 6th October, a high-pressure area over northern Scandinavia was established and began to extend its influence to cover virtually the whole of Scandinavia and the Baltic by 11th, resulting in still, calm weather. Meanwhile, a depression which had moved into northern Germany from the Atlantic on 6th, began to move slowly back across Denmark and became virtually static over the North Sea on 10th-11th (fig. 6). It was this low-pressure system, with its light east to northeast winds, accompanied by extremely poor visibility and showers, that resulted in the 'megadrift'. The very light south to southwest winds over Scandinavia were ideal conditions for the southerly movement of small passerines, and encouraged migration to begin. An occluded front across the Skagerrak, however, had resulted in

fog banks there, off the Dutch coast and over most of the North Sea, causing the migrant flocks to be swept southwest and west, off their usual south to southeast flight paths. The recoveries during this period of a Danish-ringed Blackbird *Turdus merula* and Norwegian and Finnish Robins *Erithacus rubecula* on the Isle of May, and of a Dutch Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* at Rattray Head (Grampian) help to indicate the point of origin of many of the birds that arrived in Britain.

If birders in Britain had known in early October that Pallas's Warblers had already started to arrive around the Baltic, it would have come as less of a surprise that so many should be associated with such an influx of Fenno-Scandian migrants.

The influx into Britain

The weather conditions described above would have permitted Pallas's Warblers to reach Western Europe along two routes and by two differing dates. Those departing earlier by the southern route would account for the arrivals at the end of September and the first few days of October. The main body of the influx would have arrived in the Baltic countries slightly later, having set off later on the northern route. Further movement across north-western Europe would have depended on the same synoptic situations which controlled the passage of European migrants.

That the right weather conditions did occur is witnessed not only by the synoptic chart for 11th October (fig. 6), but also by the massive influx of birds into Britain on that date. Quite apart from Pallas's Warblers, phenomenal numbers of Fenno-Scandian migrants arrived on the British east coast, particularly in Scotland and northeast England. Table 3 shows the most numerous of the species involved.

Following the main arrival on 11th October, Pallas's Warblers continued to be recorded in Britain until 6th November, but it is difficult to be sure which of those records referred to the new arrivals and which to onward filtration. There is an apparent weekend bias to the records after the main influx (on a Monday), which may well also account for the dearth of records

Table 3. Numbers and distribution of six most numerous Fenno-Scandian migrants involved in influx into Britain on 11th October 1982

Species	Peak numbers at key localities
Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	4,000 Isle of May (Fife); 250 Holy Island (Northumberland)
Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>	4,000 Isle of May; 500 Fair Isle (Shetland); 350 Holy Island
Redwing <i>Turdus iliacus</i>	2,500 Holy Island; 1,250 Fair Isle; 800 Isle of May
Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	600 Isle of May; 150 Fair Isle; 150 Holy Island
Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>	15,000 Isle of May; 2,000 Fair Isle; 1,500 St Abbs Head (Borders); 1,000 Montrose (Tayside); 1,000 Hauxley (Northumberland); 550 Holy Island
Brambling <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	500 Fair Isle; 400 Isle of May

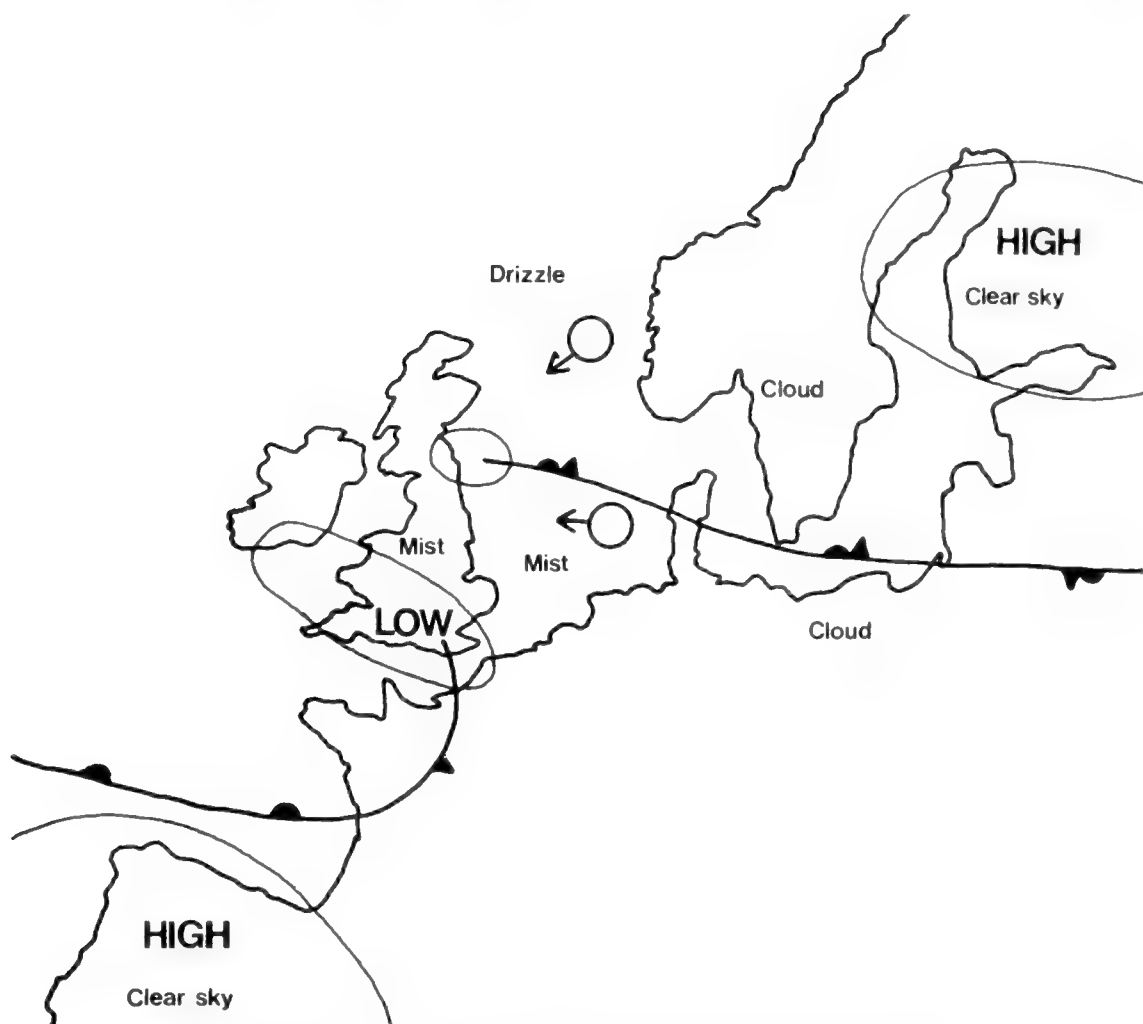


Fig. 6. Weather situation at 12.00 hours on 11th October 1982

of other Siberian species along eastern England and Scotland from Spurn to Fair Isle, an area with no fully manned observatories. This in turn may obscure the genuine arrival dates of a number of the Pallas's Warblers.

Although there are only limited published data on the weights of Pallas's Warblers, details of the birds ringed in October 1982 do provide some clues. Williamson (1962) gave the range as 4.5-7.5g; the minimum weight coincides with the two lightest (live) birds weighed in Britain in October 1982. One which weighed 4.9g when first caught had increased to 5.8g when retrapped 40 hours later. Another which weighed 4.6g (on 6th) was found dead weighing 4.3g the following day, apparently having been unable to increase its body weight fast enough to survive.

So far as Orkney and Shetland are concerned, all except one of those trapped after the main influx were light enough to suggest that they had only recently completed a migratory flight.

The apparent second influx, in Norfolk on 15th/16th, is more difficult to explain. We know the weight of only one individual: at 6.0g, it is very unlikely that it had recently completed a major migratory flight. From this it cannot be concluded, however, that all the Norfolk records around 15th October resulted from onward filtration within Britain. One possibility is that the later, more southerly arrivals were part of the main movement, but came from a more southerly part of the breeding range, and would have

started later and had farther to travel. An alternative is that the onward movement could have been from the Netherlands or France, after some re-orientation (Sharrock 1974).

It would be easy to dismiss all the later records from southeast and southwest England as being due to onward filtration from farther north in Britain. This is probably true in most cases, but is unlikely to be true of one caught in Kent on 25th October weighing only 4.6g. The second alternative given above could well be a more accurate interpretation in this case.

Other Siberian species

Apart from Pallas's Warblers, several other Siberian vagrants arrived in Britain and Ireland in October 1982 (Rogers *et al.* 1983). Both Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* and Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* exceeded their previous annual totals, with 14 and seven respectively; the Radde's Warblers included the first for Ireland, at Hook Head, Co. Wexford (Mullarney 1984). Nine of the Radde's Warblers and four of the Dusky Warblers were in the period 8th-12th October. This coincidence with the influx of Pallas's Warblers is not unexpected in view of the breeding ranges of the three species (fig. 2).

Two Black-throated Thrushes *Turdus ruficollis* and three Olive-backed Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni* also arrived in October 1982, and other eastern vagrants in Britain and Ireland from the end of August onwards were Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* (1), Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus* (1), Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (1), Stonechats *Saxicola torquata* of one of the eastern races *maura/stejnegeri* (6), Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (2), Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (3), Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1) and Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1). There was a similar—though less varied—collection of vagrants in other West European countries, the star bird, perhaps, being a Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* in the Netherlands (*Dutch Birding* 6: 50).

It is perhaps—initially at least—surprising that no Arctic Warblers *Phylloscopus borealis* or Greenish Warblers *P. trochiloides* were recorded in Britain and Ireland during the influx, and that relatively few Yellow-browed Warblers occurred. Arctic and Greenish Warblers, however, are comparatively early autumn migrants from their breeding areas and, thus, would have departed before the weather conditions which produced the influx of Pallas's Warblers. Yellow-browed Warblers, having a predominantly more northerly distribution, would have been generally outside the area of the synoptic situations which so affected Pallas's Warblers.

Acknowledgments

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184. First-winter Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*, Finland, October 1982 (Antero Topp)

Summary

During October 1982, an unprecedented influx of Pallas's Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus* occurred in Britain and other Western European countries. The main influx in Britain occurred on 11th October, although some arrived as early as 6th October in Britain and 29th September in Finland. Study of the synoptic charts suggests that the influx had two commencement dates and occurred along two different routes: (a) a southerly route along the southern edge of an anticyclone, which produced the early arrivals; and (b) a northerly route to the north of a depression, which resulted in the major influx. This major influx involved the onward movement of Pallas's Warblers across northern Europe, accompanying a major influx of Fenno-Scandian migrants into Britain. The occurrence, and absence, of other Siberian species in this influx is discussed.

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[The inclusion of colour plates 184-186 has been subsidised by Zeiss West Germany]



185. First-winter Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, Finland, October 1982 (Antero Topp)



186. First-winter Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*, Finland, October 1982 (Antero Topp)

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PhotoSpot

14. Ross's Gull

This portrait of a flying adult summer Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (plate 187) is a tribute to David Hunt's photographic skills. The species' beauty and elegance are superbly captured, and it is easy to see why it is perhaps the most sought-after of all Arctic birds. David took this photograph in Iceland in June 1980. Two inner primaries are missing, so the timing of the start of this species' complete moult to winter plumage is indicated, a useful technical point which is a bonus to its aesthetic appeal. P. J. GRANT



187. Adult summer Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, Iceland, June 1980 (David Hunt)

[The inclusion of colour plate 187 has been subsidised by Zeiss West Germany]

Obituary

David Bassil Hunt (1934-1985)

David Hunt's tragic death on 23rd February this year robbed British birdwatching of one of its best-known and most colourful personalities. Living in Scilly, now visited annually by thousands of rare-bird enthusiasts, he was probably known personally by more birdwatchers than anyone else.



188. David Hunt (1934-1985) (*supplied by Marianne Hunt, photographer unknown*)

For many, news of David's death left that feeling of stunned disbelief and irreplaceable loss reserved for a great friend. The circumstances of the tragedy were so dramatic that they attracted newspaper headlines across the world. Leading a Cygnus Wildlife tour in Northern India, he left the group and its armed warden in the Corbett National Park to investigate the cause of the sound of some mobbing birds. He disappeared behind a rise in the ground only 150m away. There, he was attacked and killed by a female tiger which had three cubs nearby. An obsessive enthusiasm and total involvement in whatever he did was a notable and attractive part of David's personality, evident even to the last.

After a cremation ceremony on 25th February in New Delhi, his ashes were brought home to be scattered by his family on the waters off Tresco. Our deepest sympathy goes to his wife, Marianne, and his sons, Nicholas and Martin.

Born on 8th May 1934, David's early interest in wildlife during his childhood in south Devon was encouraged by his father (O. D. Hunt, himself a naturalist and professional marine biologist). Most of David's teenage years were spent at boarding school—Gresham's, at Holt in north Norfolk—and he often told of his meetings with the ornithological big names of the area at that time, who were clearly the major influence in

sharpening his knowledge and love of birds. At Gresham's, he also acquired an interest in jazz, which, after periods of National Service and at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London, developed into a successful career, playing trombone with bands in Germany and London during eight years up to 1962. At the end of this period, he also worked at various other jobs, including assistant gardener on the roof garden of Derry & Toms in London. That experience helped him to succeed when he applied for the position of gardener at the Island Hotel on Tresco.

The move to Tresco, in 1964, with his wife Marianne (whom he had met in his jazz days in Germany) and his then young sons, was a complete change, and the start of that part of his life for which he was best known to birdwatchers. With mediocre accommodation, and only £10 a week from his gardening, life was hard for several years. He started selling his bird paintings, and Marianne her shellcraft items, to augment the meagre family income. Later, with local boatmen, he started weekly 'seabird special' trips for the holiday visitors, and the modest success of these sowed the seeds of a plan to run wildlife holidays in Scilly. Mainly with this project in mind, he left the Island Hotel on Tresco and moved to the main island of St Mary's in 1969. There, he increased the frequency of the 'seabird specials' and generally tried to establish himself as the birdwatching 'Man on the Spot', as he liked to be known. The wildlife holidays eventually took off in 1971, and continued with steady success. All this was backed by various entrepreneurial bird ventures, including some television work, writing, bird slide-shows for visitors, lecture tours, and leading various bird tours abroad. At other times and in the tourist off-season, he used his trombone-playing skills in The Mermaid, and took on various temporary work, such as coastguard and flower-picker. He was appointed RSPB local representative in 1968, became the Isles of Scilly Regional Representative for the BTO, and co-edited the *Isles of Scilly Bird Report* from 1973 onwards. He was a regular contributor of photographs and other items to the pages of *British Birds*, the last—a self-portrait photograph—nostalgically appearing in print in this year's March issue, only days after his death (plate 61, page 159). Bill Oddie's profile of him appeared in the 'Personalities' feature in 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 401-402).

With apparently premonitive timing, as it seems in retrospect, David finished writing his autobiography, *Confessions of a Scilly Birdman*, only last year. The book, to be published later this year by Croom Helm, gives the detailed background to the brief summary of his life related in the previous two paragraphs, and reveals an astonishing degree of ups-and-downs of life-experience which would have overwhelmed any ordinary person.

Most birdwatchers knew David from the annual 'Scilly season' which took off in the mid 1970s. At first, he preferred to shun this invasion, taking holidays abroad at peak time, but latterly, and especially since the opening of The Porthcressa restaurant and cellar-bar in 1981, managed by Marianne, he took the leading organisational hand in birdwatching activities. The Porthcressa quickly became established as the centre for evening get-togethers, and he was the instigator of entertainments such as the annual 'Birders' Ball' (come dressed as your favourite bird) and 'Birdbrain

of Scilly' identification quiz, as well as the main organiser of a varied programme of slide talks and discussion evenings, all much appreciated by the 1,500 birdwatchers who now visit Scilly each autumn. The Porthcressa was also the main centre for bird information, from David's chalked 'latest news' items on the board outside, to his establishment last year of its CB radio home-base.

In these latter years, David had achieved his ambition of a financially viable career built around his lifelong passion for wildlife; he also owed much to Marianne's loyalty and strength 'in some pretty bleak times', as he touchingly acknowledges in his book, of which the publishers have kindly allowed me to see an advance copy. The book was a revelation to me, as I am sure it will be to many others who thought they knew David well. Most of us knew things had been tough in his early days in Scilly, but not that tough!

Many envied David's lifestyle as they saw it each October: established, successful and apparently carefree, he was ever-enthusiastic over any new idea or rare bird. Yet he always had time for a friendly word with old friends and newcomers to Scilly alike. Not many, however, will realise how much he deserved that position, earned through tenacity and hard work over many years. He was too extrovert for some (over-compensation for his childhood introversion and fostered by his 'show-biz' years, perhaps), and he was verbally very short with any who, by their misdemeanours, threatened the good birder-islander relations that he had helped so much to establish.

As a birdwatcher, David's list of rarity-finds was second to none. In fact, he found so much in the early years in Scilly that the Rarities Committee seemed to disbelieve some of his claims and rejected them (not an uncommon difficulty for hard-working pioneers in new areas). His response to these setbacks was not to take his ball home, however, but to get others to corroborate his findings, and in this way he soon established his credibility and acquired a high reputation for rare-bird identification. He recently re-submitted (and got accepted) some of those old rejections, and, to his even greater credit, withdrew two past acceptances where he realised he had made a mistake. While he was expert on birds and excited by rarities (his book is full of mouthwatering accounts), he was highly knowledgeable about all forms of wildlife (especially the flora and fauna of Scilly) and an accomplished photographer.

Plans are already under way for the 'David Hunt Memorial Hide' to be erected in 1986 by the Great Pool on his beloved and beautiful Tresco. The 'David Hunt Memorial Fund' has also been established: contributions may be sent to Martin Goodey, Treasurer DHMF, 'Hilbre', Telegraph, St Mary's, Isle of Scilly TR21 0NS.

Fortunately, David's book records in full his life, something impossible to achieve in the space available here. What the book does not say is how greatly he will be missed, especially by all of us who knew him from our visits to Scilly. Without his presence, those isles will never be quite the same again.

P. J. GRANT

Notes

Pink-footed Geese feeding on school playing-fields

During the exceptionally severe winter of 1981/82, unprecedented numbers of Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* were present on the southwest Lancashire and north Merseyside feeding grounds, notably in January 1982, when well over 30,000 were found. The frozen ground and partial snow cover made food harder to obtain, and the large flocks broke into smaller groups and dispersed over a wide area. Not only did they turn to unusual food sources, but they also visited unlikely feeding locations, often close to human activity. A striking example was the use of school playing-fields at Southport and Crosby, on the fringe of the normal feeding area. C. R. Tubbs (1981, *Wildfowl World* 85: 14-15) drew attention to the recent use of playing-fields by dark-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla bernicla* around Portsmouth, Hampshire, but the habit appears not to have been noted previously for Pinkfeet.

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Dr M. A. Ogilvie has commented that he has not previously heard of this behaviour by Pink-footed Geese, although he has seen Greylag Geese *A. anser* on playing-fields. Eds

Tertial patterns of Wigeon and American Wigeon According to my experience of American Wigeon *Anas americana* (several hundred on the east coast of the USA in August/September 1980 and late August to mid October 1981, plus skins in the collections at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard, and the Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet, Stockholm) and Wigeon *A. penelope*, the differences in tertial pattern between females and immature males of the two species described by D. I. M. Wallace (*Brit. Birds* 73: 218-219) are not completely reliable. Wallace claimed that: 'On Wigeon, the centres are no darker than a full brown and the indistinct, narrow margins (only about 2mm wide) are buff to off-white; on American Wigeon, the centres are almost black and the distinct, less narrow margins (about 4mm wide) are almost pure white.' On these points I agree with Wallace only to some extent. I think that there is merely a *tendency* for American Wigeon to have more contrastingly patterned tertials, but the overlap between the two types described above is too great to use the tertial pattern as a good distinguishing character. The blackness of the centres is individually variable within both species (males tend to have darker-centred tertials than do females), and some Wigeons look darker than do some American Wigeons; the margins of the two species' tertials very often look equally distinct to me. The width of the margins varies considerably within both species: I have measured a few specimens of both species, and among them there were a first-year male American Wigeon in September with margins only 1mm wide (measured where it was widest on the innermost tertial), an adult female American Wigeon in September with



margins only 2mm wide, and two adult female Wigeons (in August and October respectively) with margins 3mm wide. Nor is the colour of the margins consistent within each species, and it is frequently buff on American Wigeons (particularly on juveniles). Another complication is that adult male Wigeons in eclipse plumage have tertials with black outer vanes (inner vanes slightly paler) and usually distinct, white margins.

PER ALSTRÖM

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Dr M. A. Ogilvie has commented as follows: 'Since D. I. M. Wallace published his note, both he and I have had the opportunity of examining more American Wigeons, including some in North America, which I visited in spring 1982. We have both found more birds separable on the characteristics given. Following valuable discussions with Aarno Salminen, however, who has recently published a guide to ageing and sexing wildfowl (alas, as yet available only in Finnish), it is obvious that the picture is far more complicated than it first appeared. Salminen has shown that both species moult their tertials twice each year, and that the tertials of the different age- and sex-classes (of which there are six to eight in each species) can differ in ways not yet fully worked out. Thus, the conclusion seems to be that the distinction noted by DIMW, and confirmed by me from live birds and skins at Slimbridge, is valid mainly for adult females in spring, but much less so for immatures or adults in autumn and winter, when there is a considerable degree of overlap, as recorded by Per Alström.

'It is clear that, while DIMW has provided a useful pointer, there is still plenty more to be learnt about separating female and immature American Wigeon from Wigeon. As a further encouragement, though, DIMW suggests that observers pay careful attention to the narrow black band that many American Wigeon have running up the sides of the base of the upper mandible (see *BWP*, vol. 1, p.483). It will be easy to see.' Eds

Identification pitfalls of a juvenile Cinnamon Teal In their article on distinguishing Blue-winged *Anas discors* and Cinnamon Teals *A. cyanoptera* (*Brit. Birds* 70: 290-294), Dr M. A. Ogilvie and D. I. M. Wallace described the field characters of these two species. We believe, however, after close study of a juvenile Cinnamon Teal at Amwell Gravel-pit, Hertfordshire, that identification of this plumage can sometimes be far from straightforward.

The bird was found on 10th August accompanying an eclipse male Cinnamon Teal. Our first impression was that it was another Cinnamon Teal, and close observation over the next few days convinced us that this was the correct identification. Some observers, however, identified it as a Blue-winged Teal.

The following description is from notes taken during 11th-15th August:

SIZE AND SHAPE Just larger than Teal *A. crecca*. No difference in bulk from accompanying male Cinnamon. Bill longer than Teal, appearing same length as male Cinnamon, but with side flaps less apparent.

HEAD Nape and crown to forehead blackish, streaked paler brown. Thin dark eye-stripe. Lores off-white and unstreaked, showing as prominent pale spot at base of bill. Obvious off-white eye-ring. Side of face including supercilium light buff, rather 'cold' in most lights, thinly streaked with darker brown. Chin and throat pale and unstreaked.

UPPERPARTS Mantle feathers and scapulars all centred dark brown and edged pale buff. Rump slightly darker with thinner edgings. Tail feathers brown, edged whitish. Bright blue forewing. Speculum blackish, lacking any green gloss and bordered in front by whitish edgings of greater coverts.

UNDERPARTS Upper breast pale buff, with gorget of brown streaks and spots. Fore-flanks slightly warmer, with mid-brown feathers and broad pale buff edges; feathers of rear flanks larger but colour similar.

BARE PARTS Iris brown. Legs dull grey-ochre. Bill blackish.

By consulting Ogilvie & Wallace, the plumage indicated Blue-winged Teal, particularly the contrasting head pattern, the gorget and the general colour tone. On bill-shape (the single most important distinguishing feature according to Ogilvie & Wallace), however, the bird was clearly a Cinnamon Teal. Cinnamon Teals have longer bills than Blue-winged, and males average longer than females. Had the disputed Amwell bird been a Blue-winged, the contrast in bill length and shape should have been at or near its greatest. As stated earlier, there was no noticeable difference in bill length from that of the accompanying Cinnamon Teal. Blue-winged can show slight spatulate bill flaps, but the presence of these on a juvenile female point to Cinnamon Teal. These flaps were best seen when the bird faced obliquely away.

The bird was aged as a juvenile on plumage and leg colour (grey not yellow), and probably (later confirmed) female. By mid September, a few feathers with a more rufous colour had appeared on the upper breast and on the flanks. The sides of the head (including the lores and fore-supercilium), throat and breast were washed orangey-buff and streaked darker, thus bringing the first-winter plumage of this bird more in line with the standard adult female Cinnamon Teal description. By this stage, everyone was agreed it was a Cinnamon Teal.



189. Female and male Cinnamon Teals *Anas cyanoptera*, Hertfordshire, 22nd August 1983 (John Miller)

The above suggests that great care should be taken when identifying female-type Blue-winged Teals in early autumn, because juvenile Cinnamon Teal may not display the plumage features described for first-winter and adult females. As emphasised by Ogilvie & Wallace, critical assessment of bill-shape and bill-size is clearly the best starting point. All observers concerned agreed that, had this bird turned up alone and stayed for a shorter period of time, it would have been claimed as a Blue-winged Teal.

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Oystercatcher hawking for flying ants At about 14.00 GMT on 3rd August 1982, from my garden at Lymington, Hampshire, I heard an Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* calling overhead. At this time, large numbers of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, Swifts *Apus apus* and Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* were swirling overhead hawking flying ants *Lasius*

alienus. The Oystercatcher joined the throng and for two or three minutes circled with the gulls, calling frequently; it dipped in flight, as if attempting to catch ants, although I could not be certain that any were actually caught.

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Common Sandpiper feeding from hippopotamus injuries On 26th August 1982, on the Luangwa river at Chinombo, Zambia (13°S), a Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* landed on the back of a partially submerged hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius*. It began to pick at the open sores scarring the animal, but whether it was eating some kind of insect in the wounds or picking at the raw flesh I was unable to tell. The sandpiper also picked at various places on the uninjured back, perhaps at some micro-organism, but was particularly attentive to the injured areas. This feeding lasted for about 15 minutes, with the hippopotamus quite unconcerned, apparently unaware of the bird. At this time, three other species of birds were seen on the backs of hippos in the Luangwa National Park: both Red-billed *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* and Yellow-billed Oxpeckers *B. africanus* were feeding, while African Jacanas *Actophilornis africanus* merely walked over them when the animals were largely submerged.

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Wing-clapping by Mistle Thrush At 08.00 GMT on 25th July 1982, at Nursling, near Southampton, Hampshire, I heard two wing-claps in quick succession and looked up expecting to see a displaying Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*. I was surprised to see instead a single Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* towering off high, with its body swinging from side to side, reminiscent of the escape flight of the Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, but without the zig-zag pattern. As it towered, the thrush gave one more wing-clap and twice uttered the normal churring call. At that moment, a large female Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* glided overhead, some distance below the thrush, which it obviously was not pursuing. Both birds went their separate ways and disappeared into cover. Although there was a post-breeding flock of Mistle Thrushes in the general area, none reacted to the behaviour of the wing-clapping individual. I had not previously observed towering flight by Mistle Thrush and have found no reference to it in a limited search of the literature.

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Possible mimicry of Corn Bunting song by Grasshopper Warbler A large willow *Salix* at the eastern end of Pennington Flash, Greater Manchester, serves as a regular evening gathering point for roosting Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra*, some of which occasionally sing; at other times of the day, Corn Buntings are not present. An area of adjacent rough grassland sometimes attracts migrant Grasshopper Warblers *Locustella naevia*, and breeding has occurred (but not in 1980).

At 11.10 GMT on 26th August 1980, having walked past the large willow, my attention was drawn by a sudden burst of song which was very similar to a Corn Bunting's but sufficiently different to warrant investigation. On approaching the 'gathering tree', a Grasshopper Warbler flew to the side of a small bush close to the willow, delivered the Corn Bunting song phrase, and immediately dropped into thick cover (nettles *Urtica* and willow-herb *Epilobium*). I believe that this 'jangling' song—best described as being almost identical in length and rhythm to a Corn Bunting's, but sweeter in tone and with a decidedly 'off-key' ending—was probably similar to that described by A. S. Norris (*Brit. Birds* 70: 502-503) and referred to by T. Milbled (*Brit. Birds* 71: 139).

The facts that this unusual song closely resembled that of the Corn Bunting and was delivered from a place where Corn Buntings occasionally sing may be entirely coincidental, but do raise the interesting possibility that the Grasshopper Warbler may, on rare occasions, mimic other bird species.

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Reed Bunting feeding on decaying potato In the winter of 1979/80, when observing birds in unharrowed potato fields near Marazion Marsh, Cornwall, I noticed many discoloured and hard potatoes which were greenish-brown in colour, and others with soft skins and decaying blackish-brown centres. Many were partly concealed by prostrate plants, and among these I sometimes found Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*, Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus* and House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*. I watched a male Reed Bunting which extracted small pieces from the putrefying potatoes and slowly munched these in its bill before swallowing them. This behaviour was repeated very many times while the fields remained unharrowed, and individual periods of such feeding lasted up to 15 minutes (I could not, of course, be sure that it was always the same bunting).

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Letters

Distinctive bird names It was the fine article on 'Canary Islands Stonechat' *Saxicola dacotiae* (*Brit. Birds* 77: 467-474) that finally pushed me over the edge into writing this letter. There we had a remarkably excellent article by a well-researched observer, who went out of his way to propose a very acceptable English name for *Saxicola dacotiae* (Canarian Chat), and yet you

persisted in plastering the unacceptable 'Canary Islands Stonechat' all over the magazine and photo captions.

British Birds and British birders are admired around the world; I am not the only American that believes your magazine is the finest of its kind in the world and who admires the 'state-of-the-art' skills exhibited by Brits I have known. But when are you going to come out of your stone-age provincialism and accept English names with international acceptance? There are at least 80 species of swallow in the world, and in most parts of this globe one can meet a friend and say 'I just saw a swallow' and mean just about anything; to call the common species on one tiny island 'the Swallow' robs the word of its meaning and is snobbish to a degree beyond reason. If there is more than one swallow in the world, then all swallows must be modified to avoid unnecessary confusion: 'I just saw a Barn Swallow' has the same meaning throughout the world. You in Britain may have no problem understanding what 'a Swallow' is, just as you probably know what 'a Tystie' is (Black Guillemot, I am told), but both terms are local colloquialisms and have no place in serious international journalism (of which, I trust, *British Birds* is a part).

This autumn we were very fortunate in California to have a co-operative *Numenius minutus* to enjoy, a first North American record. Most of the English-speaking world calls this a Little Curlew, but, because the best identification literature on the bird was found in *British Birds* (76: 438-445), confusion has reigned supreme. We ask each other: 'Did you get to see the Little Whimbrel, I mean Little Curlew, or whatever it is?' There should be no need for this confusion. There is in the world already a Whimbrel. If there are now two whimbrels, we must, following any sensible rules of nomenclature, modify both birds: a Little Whimbrel and a Common or Northern or Greater Whimbrel. But why saddle *Numenius phaeopus* with an unnecessary modifier—it has been just the Whimbrel on all continents for centuries. It follows, then, that *N. minutus* must be known by the perfectly acceptable alternative name available—Little Curlew—to avoid this unnecessary name change, because *N. arquata* is already internationally known (except in Britain!) as Eurasian Curlew. It all seems so clear, but the British provincialism stands in the way of any progress on international English names. The very same type of reasoning goes for the poor Canarian Chat—there is already one Stonechat which we do not want to burden with an unnecessary modifier. Therefore, 'Canary Islands Stonechat' is not only overly long and tedious, but completely unacceptable.

Americans have made progress toward international usage. Despite heavy criticism from provincial Americans, the 6th edition *AOU Check-List* changed our 'Common Gallinule' for *Gallinula chloropus* to the international Common Moorhen and our 'Northern Phalarope' for *Phalaropus lobatus* to the international Red-necked Phalarope, to name just two of many changes. During a recent trip to Papua New Guinea, I learned that the New Guinea birders and the Australian birders had worked out most of their name conflicts, preferring for the most part internationally acceptable English names. Only the British seem set in the Victorian era, even when it comes to discussing birds on an island off Africa! That those on the

'frontiers of bird identification' should persist in this antiquated view is to me as mysterious as, well, the puzzle in *The 'British Birds' Mystery Photographs Book!*

DON ROBERSON

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Having recently moved to Malaŵi, I am finding that one of the most confusing areas of local ornithology lies not in identification of birds, but in their names, both English and scientific: that the former may vary over a large geographical area I can accept, but, to compound the problem, it is evident that taxonomists seem to be unable to agree in many cases on either specific or generic names.

I therefore find it somewhat disconcerting to read David Collins's paper on Canary Islands Stonechat *Saxicola dacotiae* (*Brit. Birds* 77: 467-474) in which he wishes to introduce yet another name, Canarian Chat, for the species. I was pleased to see that this was resisted by the editors of *British Birds*.

Rather than bowing to the whims of personal opinions, should not ornithologists be attempting to standardise English names?

BOB MEDLAND

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The BOU Records Committee is currently considering revisions of the English names of birds on the British and Irish list; in due course, the BOURC's recommendations will be made available for discussion. EDS

Captive female Corncrake uttering craking call *BWP* (2: 575-576) attributes the monotonous rasping call of the Corncrake *Crex crex* only to the male. It is, therefore, of interest that both individuals of a pair of Corncrakes that successfully bred at the Scottish National Zoological Park in Edinburgh, in 1962 'were seen and heard uttering the well-known, rasping, two-note call, *crek-crek*. This is a particularly interesting record as *The Handbook of British Birds* mentions only the male giving this call, giving rise to the belief that both the Park birds were males. As they proved to be a true pair, however, and . . . were seen calling together in the open, it can be stated that both male and female utter the *crek-crek* call with equal clarity and persistence' (G. Fisher, 1963, *Rep. Roy. Zoo. Soc. Scotland* 51: 13-14).

JEFFERY BOSWALL

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This reference was not overlooked by Dr C. J. Cadbury in his account of the 1978-79 Corncrake census (*Bird Study* 27: 204), but we welcome Jeffery Boswall's letter drawing attention to it.

Measurement of wing-span Since 1970, I have measured both the wing-length (the distance from the carpal joint to the tip of the longest primary) and also the wing-span (the distance from wing-tip to wing-tip) of over 200 dead birds because, until the publication of *BWP*, this latter measurement was seldom included in reference books. Since reading D. I. M. Wallace's

comment on the wing-span of the White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (*Brit. Birds* 77: 323), that the calculations in *BWP* were 'often without precise references', I thought it worth setting down some of the figures I have collected and comparing them with those in *BWP*.

The wing-span is a less precise measurement than the others included in *BWP* and is open to personal interpretation. I have always stretched both wings to their maximum open position and measured a straight line from the tips of longest primaries without exerting undue pressure.

Table 1. Wing-span measurements (in mm, measured by author) compared with those in 'BWP'

Species	No. of specimens	Average wing-length	Average wing-span	Index	Theoretical range of wing-span	Wing-span given in <i>BWP</i>
Great Crested Grebe						
<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	2	204	785	3.8	638-794	850- 900
Mallard						
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	3	266	877	3.3	832-983	810- 980
Sparrowhawk						
<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	2	217	583	2.7	502-702	550- 700
Kestrel						
<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	7	244	703	2.9	591-789	710- 800
Water Rail						
<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	2	120	360	3.0	330-396	380- 450
Ringed Plover						
<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	3	129	364	2.8	347-403	480- 570
Dunlin						
<i>Calidris alpina</i>	3	114	340	3.0	315-375	380- 430
Snipe						
<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	2	133	406	3.1	391-446	440- 470
Woodcock						
<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	3	195	578	3.0	546-654	560- 600
Black-headed Gull						
<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	4	298	886	3.0	846-969	1000-1100

Table 1 shows the number of specimens that I have measured; the average wing-length; the average wing-span; the wing-span divided by the wing-length given as an index; the theoretical range of wing-spans (the largest and smallest wing-lengths given in *BWP* multiplied by the index); and finally the wing-span quoted in *BWP* for comparison. I have included only species for which I have two or more records.

From table 1, it is apparent that, in the majority of cases, the average wing-spans of species that I measured do not fall within the range given in *BWP*, the greatest discrepancies being those for Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina* and Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*.

PETER HOLDEN

111 High Street, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NN

In a letter urging Peter Holden to publish this contribution, D. I. M. Wallace commented that 'although occasionally racial differences will account for some of the discrepancies, your figures must be real'. Peter Holden has agreed to collect and collate information on wing-span measurements. Anyone finding a recently dead bird is asked to make careful note of the measurements described by Peter Holden and to send details to him (address above). Eds

Avocet correction ‘There was a notable disruptive movement of Avocets [*Recurvirostra avosetta*]’ (*Brit. Birds* 78: 121). Really? They’ll be joining the miners’ picket lines next! Surely the right word is ‘eruptive’?

GEOFFREY GORE

12 Spaniards End, London NW3 7JG

‘Disruptive’ was certainly wrong. Since birds erupt out of an area and irrupt into a new one, ‘irruptive’ would have been the correct word, rather than ‘eruptive’; these Avocets were, however, normal migrants (perhaps weather-diverted or grounded on their usual routes), so all three words are incorrect. We apologise for careless editing. EDS

Care with non-avian identifications I was surprised that the note by Paul Shimmings (*Brit. Birds* 78: 109), concerning a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* attempting to catch a bat in mid air was unequivocal concerning the bat’s identity. The only way one can be certain about the identification of most bats is to examine them in the hand or record their voices.

Whilst it is likely that Mr Shimmings was correct in assuming that his bat was a pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, may I express the hope that *British Birds* will in future apply the same rigour to the identification of other groups of animals and of plants as it does to birds.

NOEL JACKSON

4 Deanery View, Lanchester, Durham DH7 0NH

We have been accused of such lack of caution concerning mammal identifications in the past, and must plead guilty—and apologise—again. EDS

Announcements

Irish subscribers can now make payments for their subscriptions or for books in Irish pounds if they wish, by cheque, payable to British Birds Ltd, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ. To our prices quoted in pounds sterling, please add one-quarter to obtain price in Irish pounds (e.g. Stg£17.25 = IR£21.56).

From plastic macs to dirty raincoats Following the success, usefulness and popularity of the *British Birds* ‘Binoculars & telescope surveys’ (*Brit. Birds* 71: 429-439; 76: 155-161; 78: 167-175), we now aim to assess the qualities of various other items of birdwatchers’ equipment in a series of future surveys of *British Birds* readers’ opinions.

We hope that many readers will return to us the first of these questionnaires, which deals with anoraks, cagoules, coats, jackets, windcheaters and similar garments worn by birdwatchers (see page xi).

‘The Frontiers of Bird Identification’—SPECIAL OFFER This much-sought-after book, with key identification papers from *British Birds* reprinted with updating postscripts by the authors themselves, will shortly be available again, as a paperback at £9.95. (The text of this paperback version is unchanged from the previous hardback.) *British Birds* subscribers can obtain it at a *special prepublication price* of £7.95. Order your copy now, saving £2.00, and it will be despatched to you as soon as it is available. Please use the British BirdShop form on page xiii.

'Birds in your Garden' This new 160-page book by Nigel Wood (Exhibitions Officer at the RSPB) includes excellent chapters on 'Planning and planting', 'Feeding garden birds' and 'Nests for all', dealing with the provision of natural nest-sites as well as giving a variety of detailed nest-box designs. Full of useful ideas and helpful illustrations, it is also cheap (only £7.95). It is now available (post free to UK and Irish addresses) through British BirdShop (see page xiii).

'The Birds of Australia'—SPECIAL OFFER This new hefty book (nearly 2 kg), edited by Ken Simpson and illustrated by Nicholas Day, lives up to its subtitle as a 'book of identification'. The text is brief (often less than 10 lines per species), but there are 128 superb colour plates, with over 2,000 bird illustrations of Australia's 758 species. It will be published in late August, and the publishers, Croom Helm, have made it available, exclusively to 'BB' subscribers, at a prepublication reduced price of £22.95. Please obtain your copy by using the British BirdShop order form on page xiii.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

New risk for Derwent No sooner has the conservation world breathed a sigh of relief at the Agriculture Minister's decision not to grant-aid a controversial pumped drainage scheme on the internationally important Derwent Ings SSSI in Yorkshire than potentially far more serious threats loom large on the horizon. In December 1984, an organisation of navigation enthusiasts called the Yorkshire Derwent Trust filed evidence in the High Court aimed at opening up the River Derwent for general navigation from Sutton to Malton and beyond. The original navigation was closed by Order of Parliament in 1935 and since then the river has remained largely undisturbed. The Nature Conservancy Council identified the River Derwent as the unparalleled example of a 'classic river' in this country. Its wildlife includes otters *Lutra lutra* and internationally important numbers of wintering wildfowl; indeed, the NCC is scheduling most of the River itself as an SSSI, in addition to the existing sites. If the claim for a right of general navigation is not successfully con-

tested, it will open the way for a considerable change. There will be demands for marinas, fuel service points and other ancillary services. Research on other rivers shows that navigation on the Derwent would have serious repercussions for its fragile wildlife systems. Fortunately, four riparian owners are prepared to defend the case. To help them, the River Derwent Appeal has been launched by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, the Conservation Society of the Yorkshire Derwent, the National Farmers' Union, the Country Landowners' Association, and the York Amalgamation of Anglers. The Appeal is supported by many other organisations, including the BTO, the RSPB, the RSNC, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Ramblers' Association, and by the Poet Laureate, Ted Hughes. The Appeal target is £35,000. If you would like to help the River Derwent Appeal, donations, requests for information and offers of help should be sent to: Ian Carstairs, Appeal Organiser, River Derwent Appeal, c/o Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, 20 Castlegate, York, or by phone to: 065 382 542.



190. Presentation of *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky trophy to Chris Knights, 1985 winner of 'Bird Photograph of the Year' award, by Tony Soper, London, May 1985 (*R. J. Chandler*)

Chris Knights gets the bird from Tony Soper

The splendid Red Grouse trophy provided annually by Matthew Gloag & Son Ltd, proprietors of *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky, was presented to Chris Knights, the 1985 winner of our 'Bird Photograph of the Year' award, by Tony Soper, at a Press reception at the Scotch Whisky Association headquarters in London on 8th May (plate 190). The ceremony provided the usual enjoyable occasion for the 70 members of the Press and bird-photographers present as *British Birds*' guests. The closing date for entries for the 1986 competition (up to three colour transparencies taken during 1985) will be 31st January 1986.

Keswick mystery photographs

The *BB* mystery photographs competition at the BTO's one-day conference at Keswick attracted only 19 entries (was it too difficult? Or are Cumbrian observers shy? Or too modest to think they might win?). The winner of the traditional bottle of champagne, with three of the five photographs correctly identified, was David Thexton.

Large print books Subscribers who know someone with poor eyesight may like to know that 'Isis Large Print Books' have now produced a special edition of *Feathered Friends* by Ian Niall (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 77: 639). When ordering, quote ISBN 1 85089 052 8; the cost is £8.00.

Woodland handbook *Bird and Broadleaves Handbook: a guide to further the conservation of birds in broadleaved woodland*, by Nicholas Smart and John Andrews, summarises the environmental effects of different silviculture systems and discusses the ecology of birds in woodlands. Practices which are beneficial to conservation interests are identified, and means of implementing them are described with reference to actual management examples. The publication should provide a source of information and advice to the owner who is considering improvement of his woodland for birds. Excellently produced and copiously illustrated, it is available, price £9.00 including p&p, from the RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.



Adrian Cawthorne Appeal About 50 km WSW of Fair Isle lies North Ronaldsay, northernmost island of the Orkneys. It has much to offer birdwatchers for its migrants and rarities, its breeding seabirds and waders. At present, it is underwatched, even during peak migration periods. The resident GP, Dr Kevin Woodbridge, is a keen bird-watcher, helped by infrequent visitors, including Adrian Cawthorne from the BTO, who made regular expeditions there each September. When Adrian died suddenly in January 1985, it seemed a most fitting memorial to start an appeal to collect money to build a bird observatory on North Ronaldsay—a project which Kevin and Adrian had frequently discussed.

Donations to the 'Adrian Cawthorne Appeal Fund' should be sent to Dr W. Cawthorne, 17 Church View, Long Marston, Tring, Hertfordshire. Donors will be informed of the progress of the appeal. Initial acknowledgment will not be sent unless specially requested (with SAE). Forms for making single-payment covenants are available on request.

African checklists David Pomeroy of the East African Natural History Society tells us that official EANHS Checklists of the birds of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania are now available: details from EANHS, Box 44486, Nairobi, Kenya.

Good news for penguins? Penguins glancing at the *Journal of Wildlife Management* (48) might initially be as misled as we were by two titles contained therein: 'An Inexpensive Depth Gauge for Penguins' and 'An Inexpensive Speed Meter for Penguins at Sea'.

Polish birding This month's senior author has just got back from the Białowieża Forest and the Biebrza Marshes in Poland, scouting things out for *Sunbird* holidays, so expect developments in that direction . . .

Changes of Recorder Ian J. Andrews, 36 Lutton Place, Edinburgh EH8 9PG, has taken over from A. W. & M. Brown as Recorder for West Lothian, Midlothian and Forth islands (except May). Steve Henson, 86 Bedale Road, Sherwood, Nottingham NG5 3GW, has taken over from Austen Dobbs as Recorder for Nottinghamshire.

'The Bulletin of the Oriental Bird Club'

Appearing swiftly after the inaugural meeting of the Oriental Bird Club (*Brit. Birds* 78: 308), the first *Bulletin* of the OBC, for spring 1985, was published in late May. It is due to appear twice yearly, and the 28-page first issue includes articles on records of the Asiatic Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* in Thailand (by P. D. Round), migration across the Nepalese Himalaya (by Carol Inskipp) and Milky Storks *Ibis cinereus* and birds of the Javan Plain (by S. A. Wilson and G. Allport). There are also features—obviously destined to become regular—of 'News and views', 'Announcements & requests', 'Recent reports', 'Book reviews' and 'Birdwatching areas' (the first one covering Ranthambhor Tiger Reserve by M. Cocker). Details of membership can be obtained from the Secretary, Oriental Bird Club, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.



That other BBC In its latest *Bulletin*, the Bangkok Bird Club notes that it has never in the past charged any membership fee, and the newsletters have been supplied free. Now, one can officially join the Club and, for a payment of a modest US\$5.00 (or equivalent), receive the *Bulletin* by air mail. Send cheques or money orders, payable to Bangkok Bird Club, to M. R. Parcharjakorn Voravan, 656 Friendship Village, Sukhumvit 77, Bangkok 10260, Thailand.

Wildlife sounds Ron Kettle, Curator of the British Library of Wildlife Sounds has commented to us that, with so many notes, letters and even a 'Points of view' being concerned with bird sounds (*British Birds* April issue), readers should know about the many thousands of recordings available for study in 'BLOWS' at the National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AS (01-589 6603). Copies of nearly all the tape recordings and BBC Sound Archives recordings can be supplied for private study. Most are well-documented with behaviour notes, which will please Mike Rogers. All the recordings, including the almost complete world-wide collection of published discs and cassettes, can be listened to free on the premises. Furthermore, the NSA now has the latest sophisticated sound spectrograph for producing sonagrams from specified or submitted recordings. Although we doubt if Mike sees them as replacing verbal descriptions, sonagrams may do so, when we are familiar enough with them; they do have the merit of objectivity and are, at their best, exact.

Some nest We are grateful to RSPB Librarian Ian Dawson for telling us about many amusing things he unearths in the dozens of journals and periodicals that he sees. One recent one merits reproduction in full: it is a short note from *Honeyguide* (31: 49), by Pat Lorber of the National Museum in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. It reads: 'What

Makes a Hamerkop's Nest: if, all your life, you have wondered what goes into the making or decorating of the huge mass of a Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* nest, here is the answer. Mr King of Bulawayo came into the National Museum with news of the extraordinary variety of material from a Hamerkop nest which had fallen down on his property. He was asked, if he had the time, to detail the contents which he kindly did, as follows: A pan brush, a broken cassette tape, a glove, a plastic dish (plant), a plastic cup, two peacock feathers, chicken feathers, two socks, rabbit fur, forty-five rags, four mealie cobs, one piece of glass, four bits of wire, a plastic comb, one pair of underpants (male), a typewriter ribbon, a piece of leather belt, four bits of stocking, two bits of tin, two bits of foam rubber, seven bits of hose pipe, nine bits of plastic pipe (electrical), six bits of asbestos (roofing), eleven miscellaneous bones (T-bone, etc.), twelve pieces of sandpaper, four bits of insulation tape, ten plastic bags, nine pieces of paper, fifty-six scraps of tinfoil, six bicycle tyres, six lengths of insulating wire, and not to mention about 100 kg of twigs, sticks and grass.'

Tailpiece We end with another quote, this time from part of a letter, about a walk along the Tamar, in the *Western Mail* of 27th April 1985: 'I also saw a bird with a white rump fly out of the river bank and believe it was a storm petrel, it was certainly not a jay.'

Short reviews

The National Trust Book of British Wild Animals. Edited by John A. Burton. (Jonathan Cape, 1984. £12.95) A review of the mammals, birds and other wildlife of Britain, produced under the auspices of the National Trust, in co-operation with the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society, and illustrated with numerous colour photographs of the wildlife and their habitats, was a marvellous idea. The texts are by more than a dozen renowned experts. Unfortunately—and I wish that I could say otherwise—this excellent concept has failed in the production. The texts cover too much, too superficially and rather boringly, perhaps because the authors were given briefs which were too confining. The opportunities for

including magnificent photographs (after all, Britain's wildlife is spectacular, and our scenery is among the best in the world) seem to have been lost, partly by bad design (very wide margins, resulting in rather small photographs) and partly by mediocre colour-reproduction. (I could not help comparing the printing of this book with the marvellous results achieved for *The Wildlife of the Royal Estates*, published by Hodder & Stoughton.) Thus, the National Trust book is 'quite good', whereas it ought to have been really magnificent. A pity. **Owls of the World: their evolution, structure and ecology.** Edited by John A. Burton. (Eurobook Limited, 1984. £12.95) Previously reviewed by Stanley Cramp (*Brit. Birds* 67: 480-481),

this revised edition has a number of new photographs, as well as revisions to the text. It provides an excellent summary of this group, set at a popular level. Unfortunately, very few references are given (just 14 'Books for further reading'). The price was £5.95 in 1973; this 1984 edition is still very good value at £12.95. **Just a Lark! Jim Flegg, Norman Arlott, Eric and David Hosking.** (Croom Helm, 1984. £8.95) While I am sure that birdwatchers enjoy birds as much as they ever did, it often seems to me that some of the pure fun and the humour has gone from our hobby/obsession/profession, at least if the ornithological written word is anything to go by. So much of what we read is very boring and dry. We ought, therefore, to welcome a humorous look at a selection of the world's birds—a 'fun guide', as the book's Introduction has it. Unfortunately, this book fails miserably. Jim Flegg's characteristically deft touch is there in the short descriptive texts, but there is not much which is new; I'm afraid that Norman Arlott's cartoons just don't strike me as particularly funny. The selection of photographs by the Old Master and his son, and particularly the way they are produced, does them both less than justice. It looks as if somebody at the publishers had an 'Idea' which simply hasn't worked, and the four authors had a real struggle to satisfy his or her whims. I can think of countless better ways of spending £8.95 than buying this book. [MIKE EVERETT] **British Birds in their Habitats. By Ron Freethy** (The Crowood Press, 1985. £10.95) Aimed at the popular market, this much-illustrated book concentrates on threats to the environment and its flora and fauna, with word-sketches of many relevant birds, arranged under their habitats. **The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Life Sciences. Edited by Adrian Friday and David S. Ingram.** (Cambridge University Press, 1985. £25) There is no doubting that this text is authoritative, but the title would mislead me. This is not a book into which one can dip to find interesting snippets or articles, nor is it suitable for reference purposes (of five appropriate subjects which I looked for in the index, only one was to be found). This is really a textbook, which would form excellent background reading for anyone engaged in or contemplating undertaking a biological course or career. **Know the Game: birdwatching. By Arthur Gilpin.** (Adam & Charles Black, 1978. Paperback. £1.25) In just 40 fact-packed and highly illustrated pages, this small booklet touches on subjects ranging from binoculars,

field-guides, identification and nest-boxes, to societies and further recommended reading, whilst providing a flavour of the more eye-catching species to be seen in a dozen of the main habitats in Britain. An ideal gift for a young beginner or older person who may be showing a glimmer of interest in what could become a flourishing life-long hobby. [DAVID GLUE] **Die Vogelwelt des Landkreises Stade: Seetaucher (Gaviiformes) bis Spechte (Piciformes). By Gerhard Grosskopf and Dieter Klaehn.** (Verlag Friedrich Schaumburg, 1983. DM 29.80) First half of the avifauna of the Stade district near the mouth of the Elbe in West Germany (wild-fowl, breeding waders, 150-200 pairs of Long-eared Owls, etc.). Standard introductory chapters, systematic list. Numerous splendid photos, many of habitats. Loose insert map (large scale) of the whole area. Magnificent area. An excellent book. [DAC] **Forests of Britain. By Thomas Hinde.** (Gollancz, 1985. £10.95) This book assembles a wealth of information on the history of some 40 of the old forests of England, Scotland and Wales. While not quite reliable on the trees, and saying nothing of importance about birds, this book should not be missed by anyone who visits any of these forests. [ALAN MITCHELL] **Callanish. By William Horwood.** (Penguin, 1985. Paperback, £1.95) Novel, by the author of *Dunston Wood*, inspired by 'Goldie', the Golden Eagle which escaped briefly from Regent's Park in 1965. **Eric Hosking's Owls. By Eric Hosking with Jim Flegg.** (Pelham Books, 1985. Paperback, £7.95) Previously reviewed (*Brit. Birds* 75: 435), and now available in soft cover. **Capital of Happiness: Lord Grey of Fal-lodon and the charm of birds. By Jan Karpinski.** (Michael Joseph, London, 1984. £12.95) This is in two parts: a brief biography, followed by extracts from Grey's writings. Struck by blindness and other tragedies, Grey drew on his memories of birds—his 'capital of happiness'—to write his *Charm of Birds* and other gems. For those who cannot get secondhand copies of the originals, Karpinski's volume is an excellent introduction to Grey's political and private life and to his insights on bird behaviour. [R. A. CHEKE] **Johann Friedrich von Brandt. Icones Avium Rossico—Americarum Tabulae VII, Ineditae: with comments on birds, expeditions and people involved. By Bernt Loppenthin.** (Scandinavian Fine Editions, 1984. D.Kr. 385) Seven unpublished lithographed plates

of 44 species found in the Northern Pacific area and its coastal territories, painted by W. Pape in 1835, are reproduced with scholarly accounts of ornithological expeditions in the area before 1835. Detailed bibliographical research. [ROBERT GILLMOR] **Die Wacholderdrossel.** By Wolfgang Lübcke and Robert Furrer (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 569. A. Ziemsen Verlag, 1985. Paperback, DM22.00) Number 569 in this famous series of German monographs deals with the Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*. With 87 figures, 30 tables and 11 pages of condensed references, this—as with previous volumes in the series—provides an invaluable summary of knowledge on this species. There are no English summaries, which must decrease potential sales by several hundred copies.

The World Encyclopedia of Animals. By Elena Marcon & Manuel Mongini. (Orbis, 1985. £12.95) The blurb modestly refers to this as a 'magnificent book', with 'superb colour paintings', but both descriptions are wholly appropriate. The price genuinely is modest, considering the size and the amount of colour: this is a splendid book for the youngster (or household) interested in wildlife. A total of 72 pages is devoted to birds, with full-page colour paintings of representatives of each family facing a page of text, with a map showing the world distribution of the families. A great book for browsing, particularly among the groups of animals which are least well known to the reader. Reference books translated from a foreign language are not always successful, but in this case Richard Lister's translation from the original Italian has led to a smooth-flowing and readable text. Minor errors (e.g. a painting of an Aquatic Warbler mis-identified as a Marsh Warbler by both English and scientific name) should not deter potential purchasers, for this sort of book can help to enthuse a new generation of naturalists. **Die Mehlschwalbe.** By Heinz Menzel. (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 548. A. Ziemsen Verlag, 1984. DM 18.00) The usual very full account (160 pages) of the House Martin *Delichon urbica* and its ecology, in German, ranging from taxonomy to predators, and from breeding to behaviour. There are some excellent black-and-white photographs, and a long but incomplete bibliography. [SC.] **British Birds from Nature: the Tresco collection of early Victorian paintings and observations.** By Frances Mary Isabella Smith (Hamlyn, 1985. £9.95) Charming paintings of Yellow Wren and Waxen Chatterer (Willow Warbler and Waxwing)

among others, prettily perched on holly and mallow. I first thought this book to be yet another follower of *Diary of an Edwardian Lady*, but it is a serious cut above that. The background information on Frances Smith is intriguing, and the book is beautifully produced. [LAUREL TUCKER] **More Mysteries & Marvels of Nature. Insect life.** By Jennifer Owen. **Reptile World.** By Ian Spellerberg. **Bird Life.** By Ian Wallace. (Usborne, 1984. Combined in hardback £4.95; separately in paperback £1.95 each; separately in hardback £3.95 each) This 99-page book is absolutely crammed with information, drawings, labelled paintings, facts, ideas and questions. It is a terrific book for any young naturalist aged 6-15 (and this adult reviewer has enjoyed it too!). The scattered cartoon-type drawings (accompanying the questions) do, however, fit ill with the splendidly accurate other illustrations: they look like someone's afterthought intended to 'vamp-up' the book: quite unnecessary, since it is exciting enough for anyone's taste without these incongruous cartoons. Thoroughly recommended, especially the combined £4.95 version. **The Birdwatcher's Yearbook and Diary 1985.** Edited by John E. Pemberton. (Buckingham Press, 1984. £6.95) The latest in this annual series of compendia of useful information for birdwatchers. **Der Rotschenkel.** By Arnd Stiefel and Horst Scheufler. (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 526. A. Ziemsen Verlag, 1984. DM18.60) This 172-page paperback provides a good account of the biology of the Redshank *Tringa totanus*, based largely on a review of the literature, with a distinct emphasis on work carried out in Germany. There is an extensive bibliography and, in addition to the photographs, there are 27 line-drawings and numerous tables. [W. G. HALE] **Shorelands Summer Diary.** By C. F. Tunnicliffe. (Orbis Publishing, 1985. Paperback, £9.00) A welcome reprint of Tunnicliffe's finest book, recounting in diary form, birdwatching in Anglesey during the summer following his move there in 1947. The many scraperboards are reproduced afresh from the originals and printed with a clarity missing in the 1952 edition. His prose equals the elegance of his line, and 16 colour plates add extra pleasure. [ROBERT GILLMOR] **The Macdonald Encyclopedia of Cage and Aviary Birds.** By Matthew M. Vriends. (Macdonald, 1985. Hardback, £12.95; paperback, £7.95) Illustrated by colour photographs of 206 species (compared with over 400 illustrated by colour paintings

by Malcolm Ellis in *Cage & Aviary Birds* by Richard Mark Martin, published by Collins, 1980). **The Florida Scrub Jay: demography of a co-operative-breeding bird.** By G. E. Woolfenden and J. W. Fitzpatrick (Princeton University Press, 1984. \$58.50) In *Aphelocoma c. coerulescens*, other adults normally help to feed the young of a breeding pair. These helpers are usually (but not always) older brothers and sisters of the young they tend. They are always subordinate to the breeding male and, if female, to his mate also. This, and a very great deal more, has been discovered in the course of a 12-year study by the authors and their helpers. No one interested in bird behaviour can afford *not* to read this book. [DEREK GOODWIN]

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Reviews

The Birds of Orkney. By Chris Booth, Mildred Cuthbert and Peter Reynolds. The Orkney Press, Stromness, 1984. 275 pages; 5 colour plates; 12 black-and-white plates; 24 line-drawings. £12.00.

Following the standard format for local avifaunas, with 11 pages of general introductory text, mostly describing Orkney, followed by over 250 pages of systematic list, this will be regarded as an essential purchase by anyone visiting Orkney or studying the wildlife of the area. The few colour-photographs (five) are usefully devoted to views of Orkney habitats; the black-and-white photographs show typical birds of the islands. John Holloway and Ian MacInnes have supplied line-drawings to break and enliven the text. Sensibly, the latter is devoted mostly to the common birds (e.g. two pages on the Guillemot), with rarity records usually dismissed in a few lines, with just the essential details. The systematic list covers records up to and including 1982, with additional 1983 records of rarities as an appendix. The book ends with a useful six-page bibliography of references to birds in Orkney.

The general impression is of a crisply written and nicely produced book, which will provide a valuable source of reference.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Eric Hosking's Wildfowl. Photographs by Eric Hosking, text by Janet Kear. Croom Helm, London. 1985. 153 pages; about 140 plates, most in colour. £14.95.

Over the past few years, we have been treated to a series of books of Eric Hosking's bird photographs: *Birds*, *Owls*, *Waders*, *Seabirds*, *Antarctic Wildlife*, and now *Eric Hosking's Wildfowl*. Individually, each of these books is a delight; together, they form a most impressive and diverse collection of bird photographs. Surely no other bird photographer could boast such a comprehensive series at such a high standard?

Wildfowl continues the high standard, considerably enhanced by an informative, erudite and wide-ranging—yet very readable—text by Dr Janet Kear. There are about 140 species of wildfowl, and, if I have counted correctly, 79 of these are illustrated. As in the previous books, some photographs are by David Hosking, though they are not identified as such. Inevitably with wildfowl, a number of the photographs are of captive birds, but the majority are wild. There are some magnificent images; amongst those that particularly caught my eye were two

that put the birds in their habitat: a group of Eiders in flight amongst Spitsbergen ice floes, and a pair of Whooper Swans serene on an Icelandic lake.

The book succeeds on two levels: not only for the photographs, but also as a work of reference, for which both authors can take equal credit. Just two quibbles: as a photographer, I regret the lack of photographic details, which were a feature of the earlier volumes; and those using the book for reference will find that there are a number of small errors and omissions in the index.

R. J. CHANDLER

Marine Birds: their feeding ecology and commercial fisheries relationships. (Proceedings of the Pacific Seabird Group Symposium, Seattle, Washington, 6-8 January 1982.) Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa. Edited by D. N. Nettleship, G. A. Sanger and P. F. Springer. 220 pages. Free, from Distribution Section, Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0E7.

Parts I and II of this book comprise accounts of the diets and foraging habits of marine wildfowl and pelagic seabirds respectively. The studies involved were mostly descriptive, providing valuable data, but of interest mainly to specialists; all were of Pacific species.

Part III is of much wider interest. It opens with a review of the problems involved in modelling the interactions of seabirds and fisheries and of the sorts of results obtained, followed by a series of particular studies of such interactions, from both the Atlantic and the Pacific. These show that seabirds and fishermen may both remove substantial proportions of available fish stocks and, therefore, are potential competitors. So far, detrimental effects on fisheries as a result of consumption by seabirds remain unproven, but there can be no doubt that some seabird populations have declined following overfishing by man. There have, however, also been beneficial effects: man has caused some important food species of birds to increase by reducing stocks of other fish, and seabird numbers have increased accordingly. This part of the book will be valuable to anyone concerned with seabird conservation or fisheries management. It closes with three studies of seabird mortality in fishing nets, which show that the level of mortality may be very large and that it depends on the level, timing, and distribution of fishing activity and on the techniques and gear used.

JEREMY J. D. GREENWOOD

Ian Sinclair's Field Guide to the Birds of Southern Africa. By Ian Sinclair. Collins, London, 1984. 368 pages; over 850 colour photographs; some colour illustrations. Paperback, £9.95.

Viewing this book alongside those African bird guides that have gone before, most of which I either own or have seen, it fails—as in my opinion do most photographic field guides—to be of genuine use in the field.

Ian Sinclair's statement in the introduction that 'photographs have been specifically chosen to show the most important field characters' in many cases simply does not stand the test; some would in fact be better used in the South African equivalent of a *British Birds* mystery photographs competition.

His follow-up statement of 'If you think you have a better photograph than the one appearing in the book—please let me know about it' can only produce a flood of mail to the author. Many readers of *British Birds* must have better pictures than are shown of Bar-tailed Godwit, Whitethroat, Spotted Flycatcher or Willow Warbler. There are no photographs by John Karmali or Ken Newman, and too few by such as Eric Hosking, Peter Johnson, Cyril Laubscher and Peter Steyn, all of whom I know have better photographs than many of those included. This just leads me to reiterate that, as a field guide, it is a failure. If only the publisher had left the words field guide off the title, then I would have praised it as a book of African bird-photographs, but, as it is called a field guide, then that is how I have had to judge it.

Having said that, and as a sucker for any book on African birds, especially one that includes the only photograph that I have seen of a Spotted Ground Thrush (one of my rarest ticks), and if you can spare nearly £10, then buy it: the majority of the 900 pictures are worth a good look, and could be useful for reference.

NORMAN ARLOTT

A Field Guide to the Bird Songs of South-East Asia. Compiled and edited by Terry White. British Library National Sound Archive, London 1984. 2 cassettes; playing time 1 hour 53 minutes. £10.00.

These cassettes bring together voice recordings from 138 species of birds that occur in mainland Southeast Asia. They are accompanied by a booklet which gives a brief voice description for each species, lists some of the other species which may be heard in the background and makes other pertinent comments. The recordings are from a wide geographical range: Brunei, Java, Sumatra, Malaysia (over half), Thailand, Nepal, India and (surprisingly) Tunisia and France.

Anyone who has watched birds in a moist tropical forest will immediately recognise the value of a 'sound guide'. It can take months or even years to learn, unaided, all of the different bird sounds in even one patch of rain forest. Yet, once this is achieved, one's preconceptions about the relative abundance of different species can change radically; those previously thought to be rare are sometimes revealed as being common.

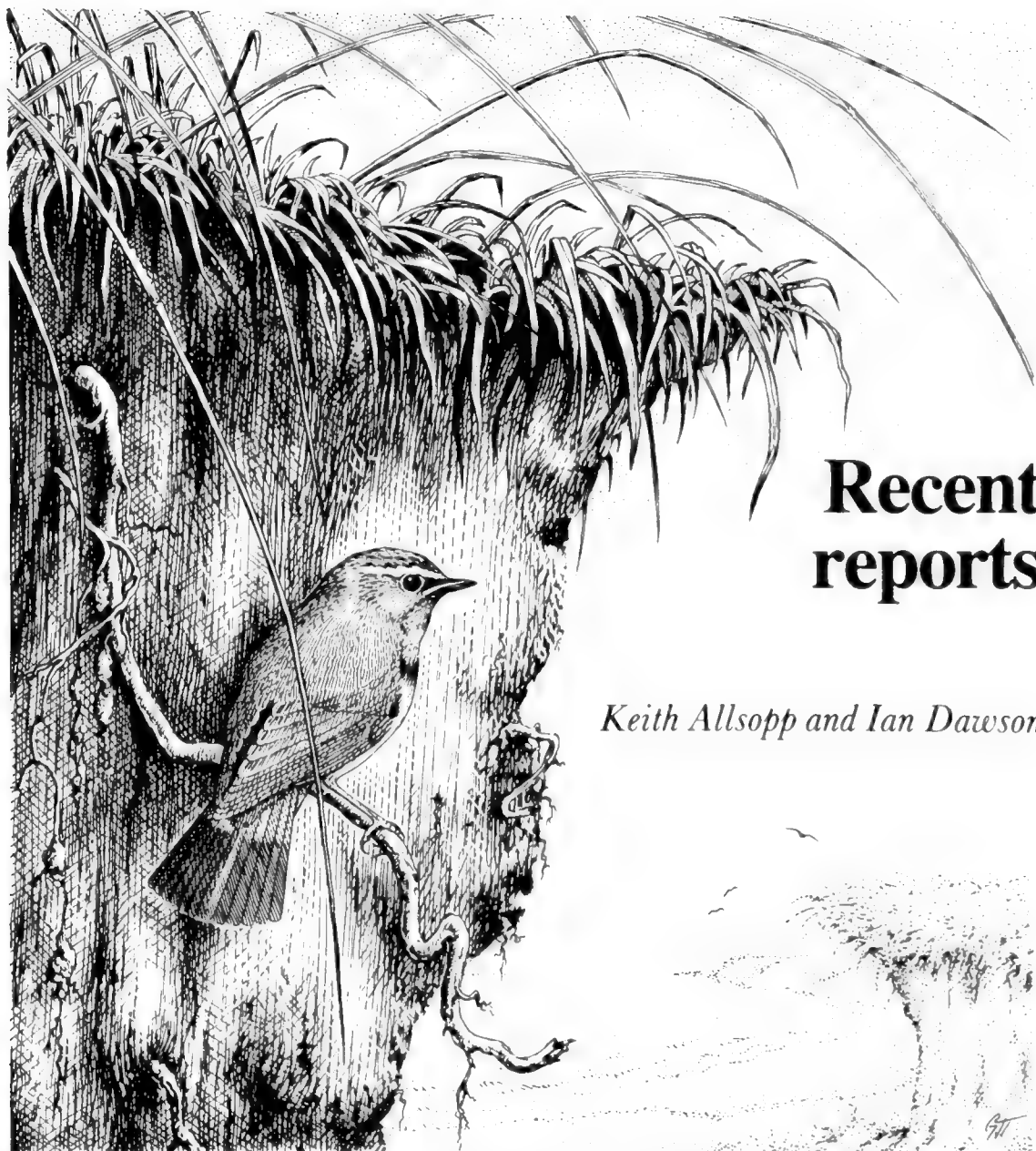
The quality of the recordings offered in this compilation varies. Most are quite good, but a few have been edited, affecting the temporal spacing (and occasionally even the pattern) of the song phrases. Listen to the recording of the Bay Owl *Phodilus badius*, for example. To be fair, however, this problem is mentioned in the preface. The interpretive text is poorly researched and occasionally misleading. One of two call types of the male Great Argus *Argusianus argus* is attributed to the female. The song attributed to the Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus poliocephalus*, is, in fact, that of the resident Sunda Islands race of the Oriental Cuckoo *C. saturatus* (as Wells & Becking have pointed out—*Ibis* 117: 366-370—the Lesser Cuckoo is unknown in Southeast Asia south of latitude 19°N). The song attributed to Black-headed Sibia *Heterophasia melano-leuca*, actually recorded in Nepal, is most certainly not this species, which not only sounds very different, but also does not even occur there (is it, perhaps, the song of the Black-capped Sibia *H. capistrata*?). It is further stated that, because their calls are similar, the trogons *Harpactes* are difficult to identify by sound alone. The recordings of the songs of the three species presented, however, demonstrate precisely the opposite. To my certain knowledge, the primary songs of three of the four other Southeast Asian species are equally distinctive. Although the difficulty of differentiating precisely between a 'call' and a 'song' is mentioned, the compiler's lack of familiarity with the wide repertoires of certain species leads him to confuse the two. For example, in addition to their diagnostic songs, many barbets *Megalaima* share similar trilling vocalisations. One such trill given by the Golden-throated Barbet *M. franklinii* is identified as the song, while the primary song is not presented. Likewise, the harsh, grating call of the Great Barbet *M. virens* is also wrongly labelled as the song. The true song, a duet, is completely different.

The frogmouths (Podargidae) are one of the few forest bird families omitted. This is a great pity, since they are the most elusive and tantalising of the night birds. Yet the compiler evidently had access to some of Dr Joe Marshall's superb owl recordings, so why not utilise his frogmouth material, too? Why include the song of the Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, actually recorded in France? Although the species is a fairly common winter visitor, it probably breeds no nearer than Northwest Yunnan.

This guide seems to be a rather hastily assembled compilation, based upon too limited a selection of material. One of the compiler's main aims, however, is to encourage more birdwatchers to record forest birds and to make their recordings available to the Archive. Although Britain has produced many tropical-forest birdwatchers of considerable aptitude, surprisingly few have taken to sound recording, unlike many fellow Europeans and Americans. Yet the recent advent of compact, high-quality cassette recorders and directional microphones has completely transformed the process, so that it need not disrupt even the most active birding routine.

My reservations notwithstanding, and given the dearth of other published recordings of Southeast Asian birds, I would recommend anyone who is considering a visit to the region to purchase this guide. The compiler is apparently planning a revised and expanded edition. I hope that he will not only have access to a more representative selection of recordings, but that he will also make more effort to incorporate such background information as does already exist.

PHILIP D. ROUND



Recent reports

Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

The dates in the report refer to May unless otherwise stated.

Weather, and spring migrants

The pattern of high pressure to the west with consequent cool north to northwest winds established at the end of April persisted into May, delaying further the return of many summer visitors. On 11th, the pattern changed, and, with the high pressure centre now to the north and unsettled weather over the North Sea, easterlies brought an impressive fall of north European migrants over the following ten days. Prominent among them were **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica*, which appeared along the British east coast from Norfolk to Fair Isle, where 70 were reported, eclipsed only by an estimated 100 on the Isle of May (Fife) on 14th and 15th. The majority

were of the red-spotted north European race *L. s. svecica*, but white-spotted individuals *L. s. cyanecula* were found on the Isle of May on 15th and at Eyemouth (Borders) on 16th. **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* and **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* were also displaced across the North Sea, as were several **Rustic Buntings** *Emberiza rustica*, with records from Filey (North Yorkshire) on 11th and 12th, Spurn (Humberside) also on 12th, Salhouse (Norfolk) on 16th, Flamborough (Humberside) and two at Sumburgh (Shetland). Strikingly beautiful **Collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula albicollis* were seen at Holkham (Norfolk) on 12th and 13th, Lowestoft (Suffolk) on 13th and 14th, and at Filey on 21st and 22nd (plate 191). **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava* of the grey-headed race *M. f. thunbergi* were reported at Elmley (Kent) on

14th, two at Cley (Norfolk) on 16th and at Filey on 18th, but only one **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*, from Salthouse on 14th. The range of species involved was more like an autumnal movement, with **Thrush Nightingales** *Luscinia luscinia* at Hartlepool (Cleveland) on 13th and 14th and on Fair Isle, a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* at Blakeney (Norfolk) on 19th to 23rd (plate 194), a **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* at Holkham on 22nd and 23rd, a **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* at Tring (Hertfordshire) on 12th, **Ortolan Buntings** *E. hortulana* at Cromer (Norfolk) on 7th and Holme (Norfolk) on 12th, and a few **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina*, **Stonechats** *Saxicola torquata* of the eastern race *S. t. maura*, and **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops*. An interesting find away from the East Coast was a **Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli*, singing in a wood near Swansea (West Glamorgan) from 18th to 25th.

To return to the weather: after 22nd, the high pressure declined, and unsettled cyclonic westerlies followed for a few days, with a pulse of warm southerly air arriving on 27th, followed by the establishment of an anticyclone giving hot settled weather. More-typical spring rarities occurred: **Sub-alpine Warblers** *Sylvia cantillans* on Bardsey (Gwynedd) in mid month, at Holkham on 27th, Lytham (Lancashire) on 28th and at

191. Male Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*, North Yorkshire, May 1985
(John Harwood)



192. Male Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*, Dorset, May 1985 (Gavin Haig)

Spurn on 30th and 31st, a **Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica* at Portland on 27th (plate 192), and a **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* at Spurn on 28th, one having also been seen earlier on the Isle of May on 8th. Following an **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* at Cley on 25th, a **Needle-tailed Swift** *Hirundapus caudacutus* gave a two-hour display at Fairburn Ings (North Yorkshire) on 27th. **Swifts** *Apus apus* were only just becoming widespread by this time, some two weeks later than usual. The west of Britain had been missing most of the action, but had its compensations: a flock of 15-20 **Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* was seen near St Ives (Cornwall) on 25th, followed by a further 27 on 26th at Porthgwarra (Cornwall); Bardsey had its largest-ever arrival of **Spotted Flycatchers** *Muscicapa striata* in late May (very much later than usual); and a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Dendroica coronata* was an unseasonal find on the Calf of Man on 30th and 31st. A **Daurian Starling** *Sturnus sturninus* present on Fair Isle from 7th, will be a new British species if its credentials prove satisfactory. Another exciting observation was of a **Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria* arriving at St Catherine's Point (Isle of Wight) on 18th. Yet another **Serim** *Serinus serinus* arrived at this spot on 3rd, another was seen at Spurn on 18th and one singing individual could be found at Holkham during the month (plate 195).

Birds of prey

Eight **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* were seen in East Coast areas, probably displaced Scandinavian birds; some, however, might choose to stay like the original recolonists. Yet another May record of **Black Kite** *Milvus*

migrans in Kent occurred on 24th, at Sheppey, and a **Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was a rare passage sighting inland at Grafham (Cambridgeshire) on 25th, whilst a late-returning **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* passed Spurn on 31st. A commoner spring species was the **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* at Overstrand (Norfolk) on 25th and 26th, and another was present about the same time at Tuddenham (Suffolk).

Wading birds

With the flood of northeast European vagrants came several **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus*: at Elmley on 13th and 14th, three at Breydon Water (Norfolk) on 18th, two on the Humber Estuary on 24th and 25th, and one at Pool of Virkie (Shetland). **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii*, however, did not appear in abnormal numbers, being found at Hanningfield Reservoir (Essex), Rutland Water (Leicestershire), in Northamptonshire, and at Minsmere (Suffolk). The last locality did hold a **Stilt Sandpiper** *Micropalama himantopus* on 4th to 6th, giving a rare spring sighting of this uncommon Nearctic species. Passage **Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* were found in their usual areas in Cambridgeshire, a flock of 15 being seen near Cottenham on 3rd, but in general spring passage has been disappointing.

Following the report, last month, of a **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* on the Erme Estuary (Devon), departing on 1st, other sightings were of one at Spurn on 10th and another at the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) on 11th. A report of the commoner **White Stork** *C. ciconia* came from Marazion (Cornwall) on 2nd. The mini-invasion by **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* continued, with another seen at St Catherine's Point on 19th, one on the Swords Estuary (Co. Dublin) (plates 197 & 198), and other singles at Fairburn Ings on 23rd and at Hickling (Norfolk) and Hamford Water (Essex) on 26th. A **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* was found at Cley on 24th, where earlier a **Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* had been seen on 16th, with another at Hickling on 26th. **Cranes** *Grus grus* were seen on the East Coast, at Filey on 6th and Minsmere on 23rd, the **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* seen last month at Bude (Cornwall) departed by 4th, but the return of the **Little Bitterns** *Ixobrychus minutus* to last year's site gives hopes of another successful breeding season.

Seabirds and wildfowl

The movement overland of **Arctic Terns** *Sterna paradisaea* in late April continued into May, with over 140 seen at Hanningfield Reservoir on 2nd and 40 in Bedfordshire on 3rd. An early **Caspian Tern** *S. caspia* was reported from Church Norton (West Sussex) on 16th, and a **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* was sighted off St Margaret's Bay (Kent) on 6th. Inland, **Arctic Skuas** *Stercorarius parasiticus* visited Fairburn Ings on 23rd and 27th, and four **Pomarine Skuas** *S. pomarinus* passed Portland Bill on a brief sea watch on 13th. A **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* was at Ogmore (Mid Glamorgan) on 16th (plate 193), a **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* was still present in Shetland at Whalsay Ferry well into the month, but a female **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* at Lerwick was last reported on 3rd. Inland, two male **Velvet Scoters** *Melanitta fusca* were seen at Hanningfield Reservoir from 16th to 23rd, a **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* called in at South Mills Gravel-pit (Bedfordshire) on 14th, and **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* reports came from Witcombe Reservoir (Gloucestershire) on 16th to 18th and also from Chew Valley Lake (Avon).



193. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Mid Glamorgan, May 1985 (Howard Nicholls)

Recent rarities decisions

The records of **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* at Farlington Marshes (Hampshire) in June 1983 and **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* at Spurn (Humberside) in May 1984 have both been accepted. The record of **Savannah Sparrow** *Ammodramus sandwicensis* at Portland Bill (Dorset) in April 1982 has been accepted into Category A of the British and Irish list as referring to the Sable Island race *A. s. princeps*, colloquially known as 'Ipswich Sparrow'.



194. Female Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*, Norfolk, May 1985 (David Tomlinson)



195 & 196. Left, male Serin *Serinus serinus*; right, male Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*: Norfolk, May 1985 (Steve Young)

Latest news

Apart from **Black Kite** at Tees-mouth (Cleveland) on 6th, all interest focused on East Anglia in early July: **Greater Yellow-legs** *Tringa melanoleuca* at Minsmere on 4th,

5th and 7th, and **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* on 5th; **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* and **Broad-billed Sandpiper** at Cley on 4th; **Serin** at Wells (Norfolk) on at least 5th and 6th.

197 & 198. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Co. Dublin, May 1985 (Brian Madden)



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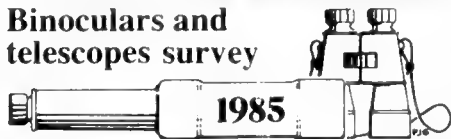
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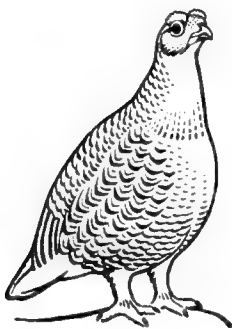
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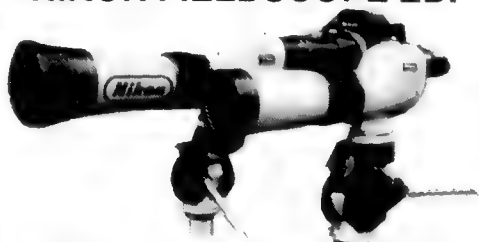


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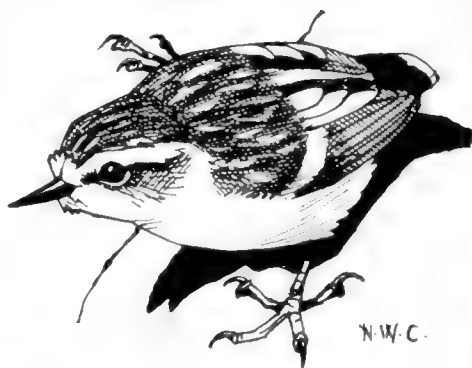
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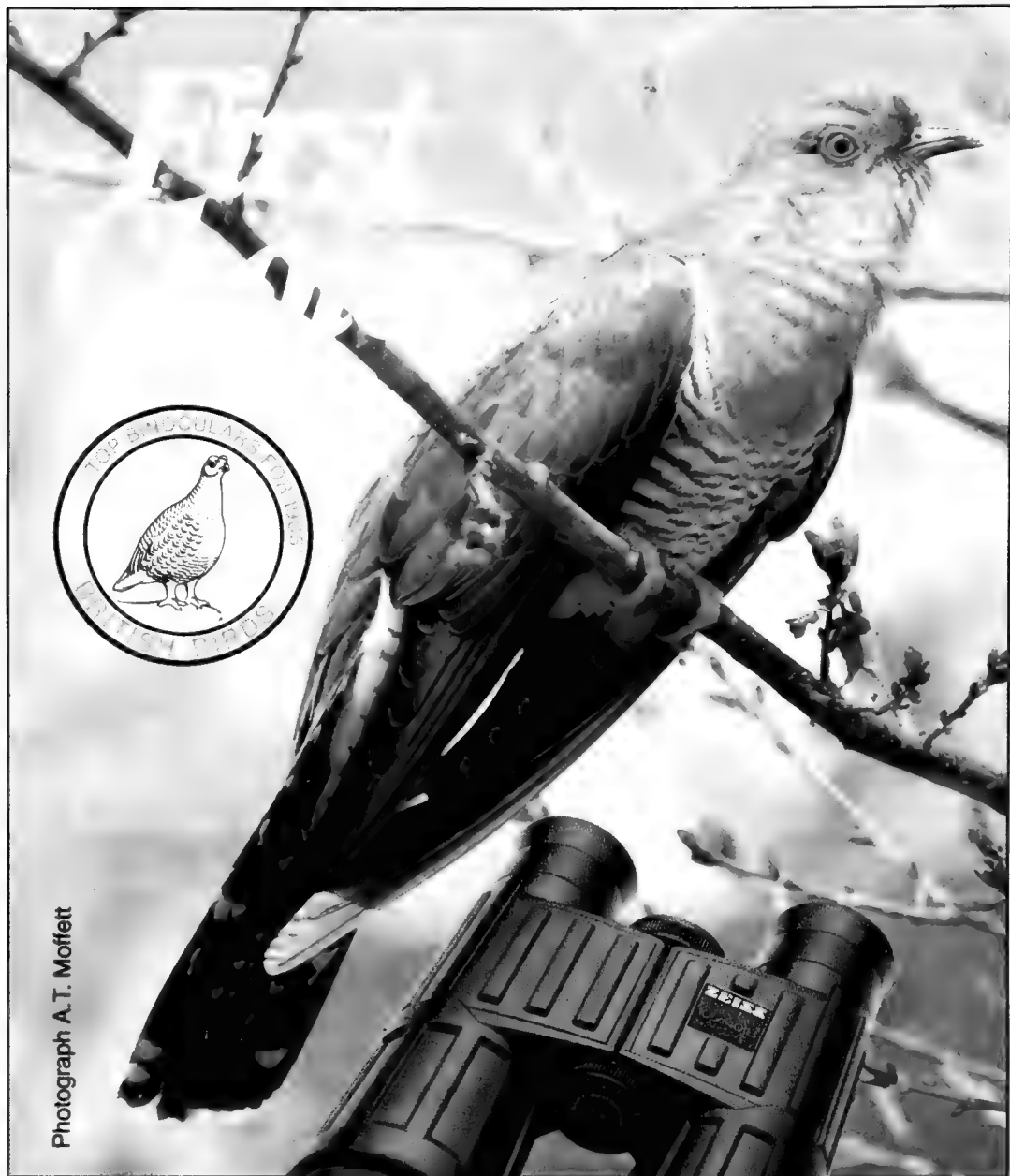
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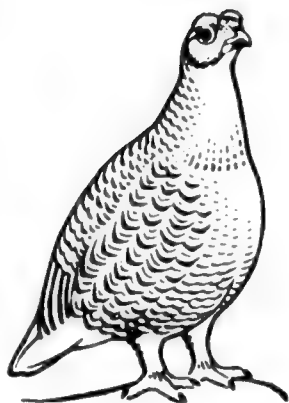
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Plumage, age and moult terminology

The ability to tell the age of a bird by its plumage and other features is, in itself, an interesting and challenging part of identification. Also, for some difficult-to-identify species, it is often an essential starting point in the identification process. In these and other studies related to plumage, a clearly defined terminology is important, and it would seem useful, therefore, to define that used in *British Birds*.

'Calendar-year' terminology is useful as a simple age-categorisation in some cases, and is defined and discussed separately. Other systems of plumage, age and moult terminology are used elsewhere. These are also discussed, and the equivalent terminology for two important ones (the 'Humphrey & Parkes' system, and that used in *BWP*) are given in table 1.

'British Birds' terminology

DISTINCT PLUMAGES

Juvenile (abbreviation: *juv*) The first set of true feathers, which replaces the down plumage.

Juvenile plumage is that in which the bird first flies, although some species (e.g. some auks) are flightless until they acquire first-winter plumage. In the great majority of species, juvenile plumage is distinguishable from other immature or adult plumages. Juvenile plumage is retained until the moult to first-winter plumage (also called the post-juvenile moult). Depending on the species, this moult can be anything from partial (involving at least most of the head and body feathers), as is the case with most species, to complete. Depending, again, on the species, the moult to first-winter starts at any time from shortly after fledging to winter.

First-winter (abbreviation: 1st-w) In some species, especially those few which have a complete post-juvenile moult, the first-winter plumage may be similar to the adult winter plumage. In others, juvenile features are retained (especially distinctive patterned juvenile wing and tail feathers) which enable first-winter plumage to be identifiable. First-winter plumage is retained until the moult to first-summer plumage, which, depending on the species, starts in late winter to spring. This moult is partial in most species, complete in very few. Some species do not moult at this time, in which case first-summer plumage is either little different from first-winter, or is acquired by loss of feather-fringes which reveals the underlying first-summer coloration.

First-summer (abbreviation: 1st-s) It should be firmly noted that 'first' summer here refers to the first full summer after the year of hatching, not to the summer in which the bird was hatched: misunderstanding of this simple point can lead to a great deal of confusion. First-summer plumage is identifiable only on those species which acquire distinctive first-summer features (including through differential feather-wear) or, much more commonly, by the continued retention of juvenile features (especially, distinctive juvenile wing and tail feathers). First-summer plumage is retained until the moult to second-winter plumage, which, depending on the species, starts in early summer to early winter. This moult is complete in most species, partial in rather few.

Second-winter (abbreviation: 2nd-w) Second-winter plumage is identifiable only on those species which acquire distinctive second-winter plumage patterns or other features, and is retained until the moult to second-summer plumage, which, depending on the species, starts in late winter to spring. This moult is partial in most species, complete in very few.

Second-summer (abbreviation: 2nd-s) Second-summer plumage is identifiable only on those species which acquire distinctive second-summer features, or, more commonly, by the retention of second-winter features (especially, distinctive second-winter wing and tail feathers). Second-summer plumage is retained until the moult to third-winter plumage, which, depending on the species, starts in early summer to early winter. This moult is complete in most species, partial in rather few.

Third-winter (abbreviation: 3rd-w) Some species take a further year or more to acquire adult plumage, and follow a sequence of plumages after second-summer, thus, 'third-winter', 'third-summer' (3rd-s), 'fourth-winter' (4th-w), 'fourth-summer' (4th-s), and so on.

Adult (abbreviation: ad) The ultimate plumage of a bird, which does not change further through age. It should be noted that, in some species, 'adult' plumage does not necessarily indicate sexual maturity. Many species have adult plumage which changes twice a year: 'adult summer' (ad. s), which results from a moult which starts in late winter to spring (the 'spring moult'), or from the loss of fringes on winter plumage feathers; and 'adult winter' (ad. w), which results from a moult which starts in early summer to early winter (the 'autumn moult').

GENERAL TERMS

Immature (abbreviation: imm) Any plumage other than adult. The length of recognisable immaturity varies from a few weeks to several years, depending on the species. It should be noted that 'immature' here refers only to plumage, since some species can be sexually mature while still in an immature plumage.

First-year (abbreviation: 1st-y) A general term covering the plumages of approximately the first 12 months of life, thus referring jointly to juvenile, first-winter and first-summer plumages.

Second-year (abbreviation: 2nd-y) A general term covering the plumages of approximately the second 12 months of life, thus referring jointly to second-winter and second-summer plumages. Similarly, 'third-year' (jointly third-winter and third-summer plumages: abbreviation 3rd-y), 'fourth-year' (4th-y), and so on.

We consider that use of the vague term 'sub-adult' should be avoided. There is no widely accepted definition of the term, and, in any case, it seems to be a less descriptive alternative for terms which have already been

defined here. If vagueness over the age or plumage of a bird is unavoidable, it would be better to describe it as, for example, 'immature', 'first- or second-year', 'immature other than juvenile', or 'near-adult' as appropriate.

TRANSITIONAL PLUMAGES

Transitional stages are referred to as, for example, 'juvenile moulting to first-winter', or 'first-summer moulting to second-winter'. For species which acquire summer plumage by loss of feather fringes rather than moult, phraseology such as 'first-winter in transition to first-summer', or 'adult winter in transition to summer' is more appropriate. The duration of a moult can vary from a few weeks in the case of small species, to several months in the case of some large species.

Calendar-year terminology

A simple terminology for age-categorisation (for immatures or known-age adults) is based on the calendar year, and is useful in some cases. Calendar-year terminology has been rather little used in Britain, but is increasingly

199. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* near end of complete autumn moult from adult summer to adult winter plumage. The dark-marked winter head plumage shows that these feathers have already been renewed: only the outermost primary on each wing remains to be dropped, and the end of the autumn moult will come with the full growth of its replacement.

U.S.A. September 1984 (*Richard Chandler*)



popular abroad, especially in Europe. It is especially well-suited to those species which have lengthy or overlapping moult periods and thus have no long-lasting or static winter or summer plumages. It is also useful when age-groups need to be referred to generally, or when precise plumage definition is inappropriate or not determinable.

'First calendar-year' (abbreviation: 1st cal-y) refers to individuals up to 31st December of their hatching year. 'Second calendar-year' (2nd cal-y) refers to individuals from 1st January to 31st December of the year after hatching. Similarly, 'third calendar-year' (3rd cal-y), and so on.

When necessary, further precision can be added to the calendar-year terminology by the addition of the date, month or season, for example 'first calendar-year (December)' or 'third calendar-year (autumn)'. The calendar-year terminology as defined here is, of course, unsuitable for use in equatorial regions or in the southern hemisphere.

Discussion

Several other systems of plumage and moult terminology are in use elsewhere. It should be noted that our attempts to find a single, internationally acceptable terminology were unsuccessful. Such consistency would be highly desirable, but a draft of this editorial sent to five international consultants attracted five different proposed alternatives! In deciding to retain the existing *British Birds* terminology, we are conscious that it can be criticised on mainly semantic grounds. For example,

200. First-winter Dunlin *Calidris alpina*. The post-juvenile moult of small waders does not include the wing feathers, and the neatly pale-fringed, retained juvenile wing-coverts and tertials enable this first-winter individual to be distinguished from adult winter plumage (which would have plainer coverts and tertials, matching the rest of the upperparts). Essex, October 1984 (*R. Glover*)



'summer' and 'winter' plumages do not necessarily fully coincide with those seasons; migrants occur in the southern hemisphere's summer in 'winter' plumage; season-based terminology is inappropriate for equatorial species; and it is rather inappropriate for species which have a complete, once-yearly moult (e.g. the adult winter and adult summer 'plumages' of Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* involve the same set of feathers).

201. Juvenile Dunlin *Calidris alpina* moulting to first-winter plumage. The progress of the post-juvenile moult on this individual can be clearly seen from the mixture of old juvenile mantle feathers and scapulars (dark with sharply defined pale fringes) and new, plainer, first-winter ones. Republic of Ireland, September 1975 (Richard T. Mills)





202. Juvenile Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* moulting to first-winter plumage. The post-juvenile moult of this species is a complete one (on this individual, only the juvenile head feathers are still to be replaced), and is followed by only one moult each year, a complete one in autumn. Starlings acquire summer plumage not by a spring moult, but by loss of the white feather-tips in spring, giving a more uniform and glossy appearance. In first-winter and first-summer plumages, Starlings are often distinguishable from adults only by detailed in-the-hand examination, if at all. Surrey, September 1974 (*Michael W. Richards*)

203. First-summer male Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*. This species retains some juvenile wing and tail feathers throughout its first year, and males do not acquire full adult summer plumage in the spring moult to first-summer plumage, enabling this age to be readily distinguished. Shetland, June 1969 (*Bobby Tulloch*)



We feel, however, that, with the definition given here, any semantic anomalies are superficial, and can readily be interpreted. Certainly, the *British Birds* terminology (or the calendar-year alternative) is well-suited to the vast majority of species likely to be dealt with in our pages. The main components of our terminology are also established, having been first outlined by Witherby (1909), who adapted the model provided by Dwight (1900): as such—in Britain at least—it is by far the most used and most widely understood. We see no benefit, therefore, in changing to any of the alternative terminologies, which can equally be criticised for semantic or other reasons.

The terminology proposed some time ago by Humphrey & Parkes (1959; see also Stresemann 1963; Humphrey & Parkes 1963; Amadon 1966) is unconnected with seasons or other annual or reproductive cycles, and the intervening moults are named for incoming (rather than outgoing) plumages. As such, it avoids associated semantic anomalies. It is, however, unfamiliar to most European ornithologists and birdwatchers, and requires a longer period of exposure if it is to become universally accepted. It is already used in some literature in North America and elsewhere, and thus we feel that it would be useful, for reference purposes, to give Humphrey & Parkes's alternatives to the *British Birds* terminology (table 1). For the same reason, table 1 also includes the alternative terminology used in much of *BWP*.

204. Third or fourth calendar-year Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*. The lengthy, overlapping moults of some large species, such as large birds of prey, mean that at any one time there can be three different generations of feathers in the wings and tail, and also that there is no static winter or summer plumage. The calendar-year terminology is therefore more appropriate for describing the age of immatures of such species. Sweden, January 1969 (*P. O. Svanberg*)





205. Juvenile Blackbird *Turdus merula* moulting to first-winter plumage. That the post-juvenile moult is under way on this individual is indicated by some new, unstreaked first-winter scapulars, and by the fact that other scapulars and uppertail-coverts appear to be missing. ‘Immature’, ‘first-year’, or ‘first calendar-year’ would also correctly describe the age or plumage of this individual, but ‘juvenile moulting to first-winter’ is the most informative. Hertfordshire, August 1976 (*E. A. Janes*)

Table 1. ‘British Birds’ plumage and moult terminology, showing ‘BWP’ and Humphrey & Parkes alternatives

The names of the moults are in *italics*

‘British Birds’	BWP	Humphrey & Parkes
Juvenile	Juvenile	Juvenal
<i>Moult to first-winter or post-juvenile moult</i>	<i>Post-juvenile moult</i>	<i>First prebasic moult</i>
First-winter	First immature non-breeding	First basic
<i>Moult to first-summer</i>	<i>First immature pre-breeding moult</i>	<i>First prealternate moult</i>
First-summer	First immature breeding	First alternate
<i>Moult to second-winter</i>	<i>First immature post-breeding moult</i>	<i>Second prebasic moult</i>
Second-winter	Second immature non-breeding	Second basic
<i>Moult to second-summer</i>	<i>Second immature pre-breeding moult</i>	<i>Second prealternate moult</i>
Second-summer	Second immature breeding	Second alternate
<i>Moult to adult winter or autumn moult</i>	<i>Adult post-breeding moult</i>	<i>Prebasic moult</i>
Adult winter	Adult non-breeding	Definitive basic
<i>Moult to adult summer or spring moult</i>	<i>Adult pre-breeding moult</i>	<i>Prealternate moult</i>
Adult summer	Adult breeding	Definitive alternate

Acknowledgments

We thank Laurence C. Binford, Carl Edelstam, E. J. van Ijzendoorn, Dr Kenneth C. Parkes, C. S. Roselaar and Lars Svensson for their valued comments on an earlier draft of this editorial, which have prompted important improvements in the published version.

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Spring migration 1985



Peter Holden

This spring saw the tenth 'phone-in' survey of migrant arrivals run by the Young Ornithologists' Club, the junior section of the RSPB. This annual survey started in a small way in 1976 and has become progressively more sophisticated.

This year, YOC members and interested adults were invited to telephone one of nine regional offices of the RSPB or the Irish Wildbird Conservancy and report first-sightings of migrants. A team of more than 40 people helped to answer calls for two hours each week from 19th March to 14th May inclusive. Weekly analysis was carried out by the RSPB Data Processing Department, and a digest of the week's findings was reported to BBC Ceefax, which gave the YOC its own pages (295, BBC2).

During the nine weeks of the phone-in, the YOC received over 2,200 calls, giving details of more than 8,000 sightings of summer migrants. Volunteers answering the calls were instructed to note all observations, to cross-question observers when difficult species were reported or unusually early sightings were made, and to tell the observer how his or her records fitted in with the national pattern which was emerging. Volunteers scored observations as 'reliable', 'unreliable' or 'possible but unexpected';

'unreliable' reports have been omitted from any analysis, but the 'possible' sightings have been included when they were later found to conform or nearly conform to the national picture.

The following is a summary of arrival patterns of the 15 species for which the YOC received more than 100 reports. A comparison is made with last year's reports and with an 'average' arrival pattern compiled from records received during 1978-84. Percentages have been adjusted to take account of a 9% increase in the number of reports in 1985 compared with 1984.

Weather

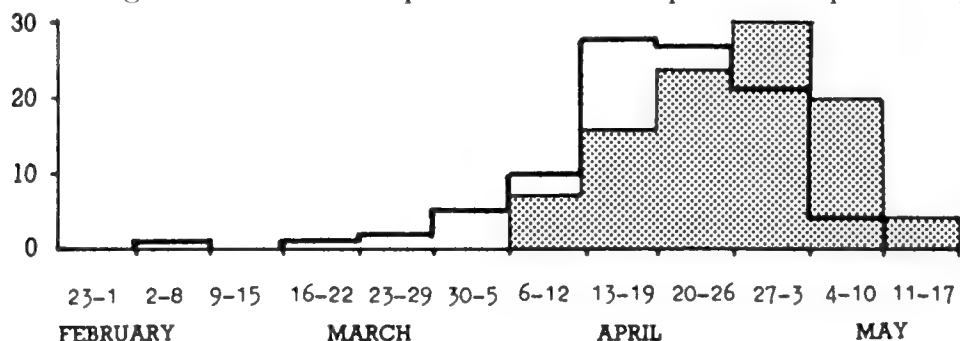
This report does not relate the YOC's reports to weather conditions for the nine weeks. For details of the weather at the time, readers should refer to the summaries published monthly in 'Recent reports'.

Histograms

The histograms show the periods of first (not main) arrival. The horizontal axis is divided into seven-day periods running from Saturday to Friday. The vertical axis shows the percentage of the total number of records for each species. (Records constituting < 0.5% in any period are not shown.) The 1985 records are shown by stippling, and the average of the seven previous years' records is shown by the solid line.

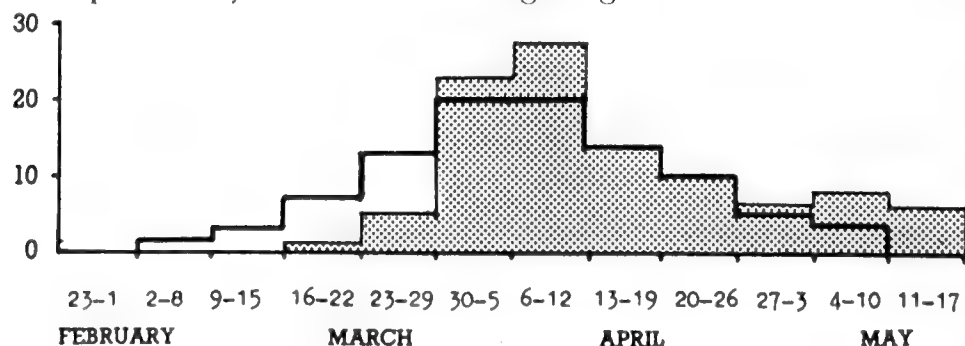
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Late arriving, no March migrants reported. First probable migrant seen on 6th April, in Surrey. Numbers built up more slowly than normal, with peak arrival during the last week of April. Number of reports 9% up on last year.



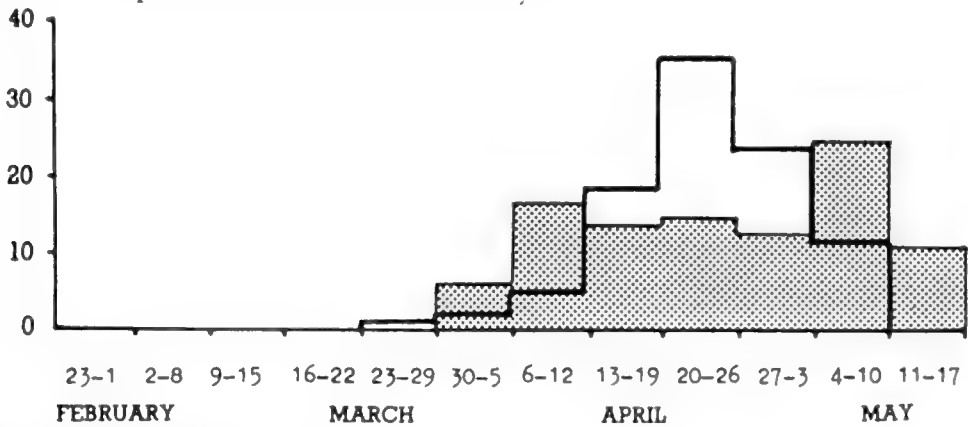
Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Late arriving, with less than average numbers reported during March. Peak arrival took place during the first two weeks of April, which follows the pattern of previous years. Number of sightings 10% more than in 1984.



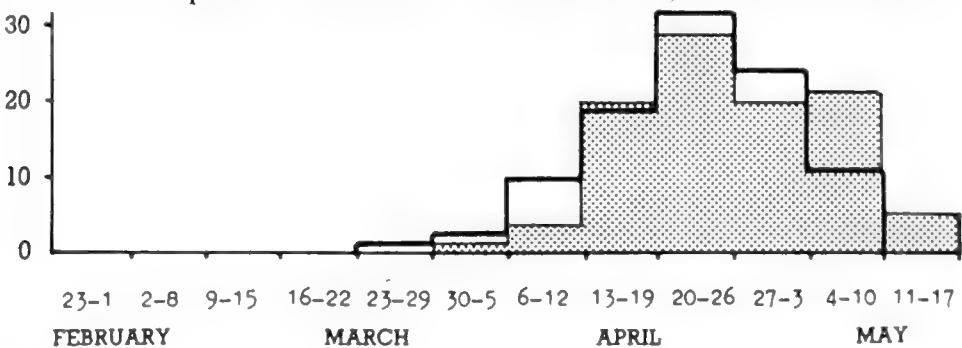
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

First reported on 2nd April, in Kent, and a rush during the first two weeks of the month was earlier than usual, but this momentum was not maintained and the number of reports remained low until the first week of May. Numbers of reports 9% fewer than last year.



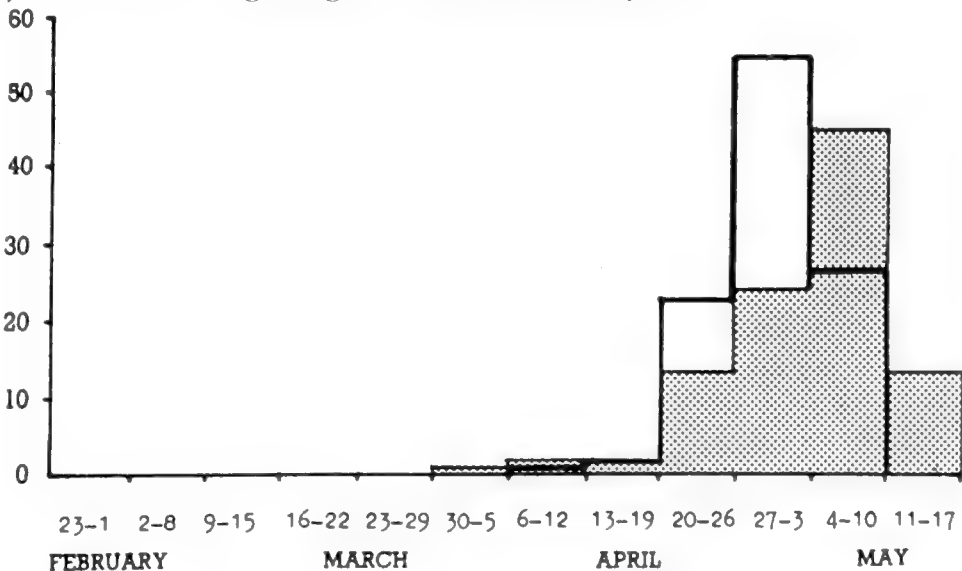
Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

A similar pattern of arrival to the 'average' of the last few years, except more than usual (10%) were first reported in May, and there were 22% fewer reports. First accepted record was on 24th March, in Hertfordshire.



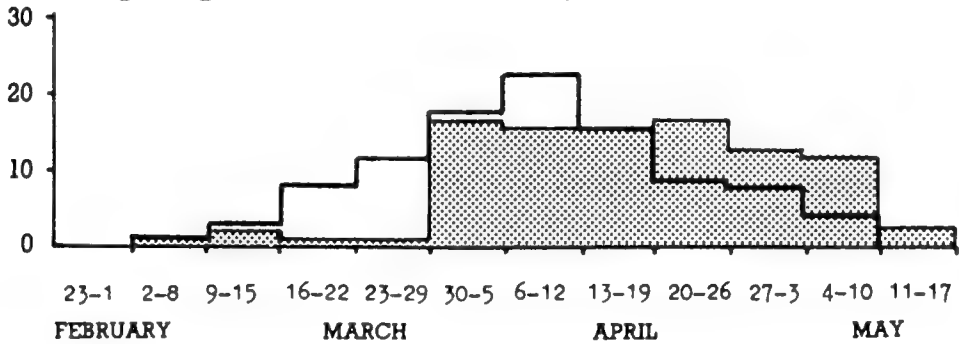
Swift *Apus apus*

First reported on 3rd April, in Norfolk, but this did not herald an early arrival for the majority of our Swift population. Arrival was, on average, a week late, with most observers not seeing their first Swift until the first week of May. Number of sightings 7% down on last year.



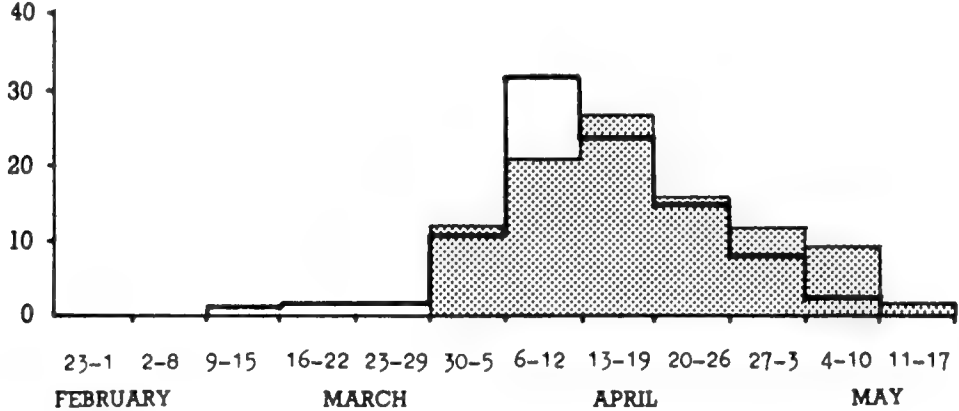
Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

First reported on 5th March, in Dorset, but only a few other March reports. The first week of April saw this species starting to arrive, much later than normal, and in very small numbers. More continued to arrive throughout April and early May, much later than average. By the end of the survey, the number of sightings was 8% down on last year.



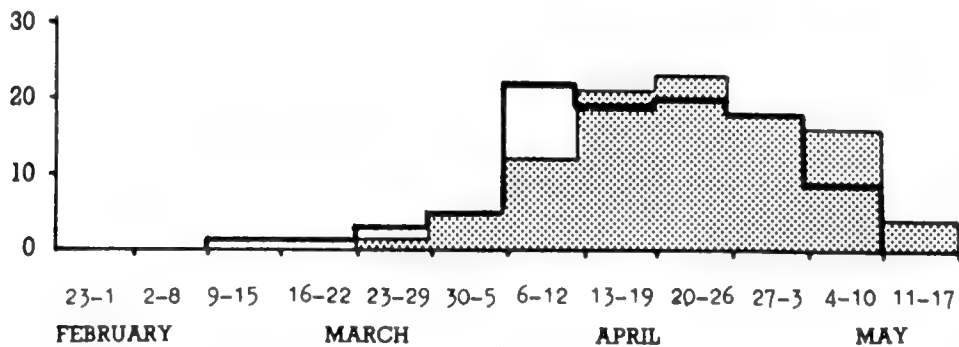
Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

The first report this year was on 21st March, in West Yorkshire. The pattern of arrival was similar to the average for the last eight years, except that the peak week was 13th-19th April instead of 6th-12th April, and a few observers still reporting first sightings as late as the first week of May. Similar numbers of reports received in 1984 and 1985.



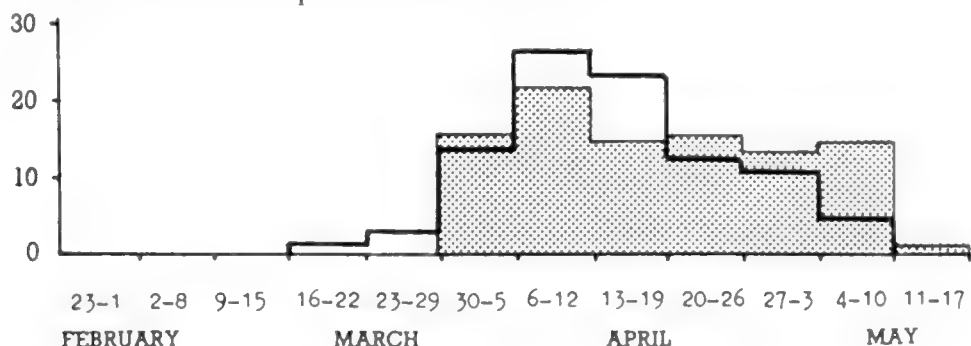
House Martin *Delichon urbica*

First reported on 7th March, in Essex; the arrival period was, on average, a week late. Most reports of first migrants were during the period 13th April to 10th May. Number of reports was about the same as in 1984.

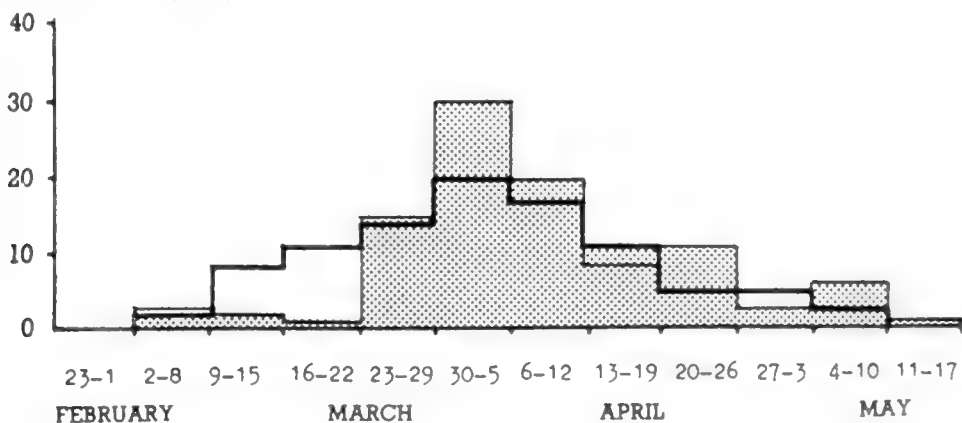


Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

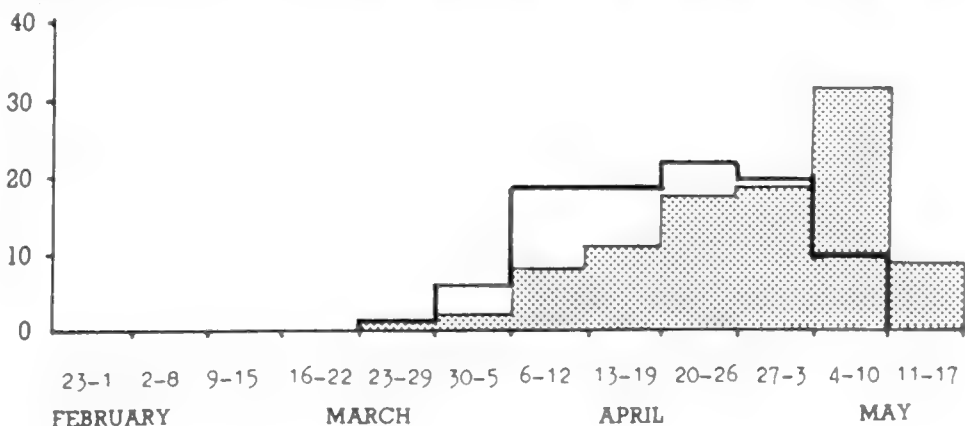
Late arriving, with only eight reports during March, mostly during the last two days of the month and in southern England. Fewer than usual were seen in mid April, and migration appears to have continued well into May. There were 10% fewer reports than in 1984.

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

First seen on 2nd March in Norfolk, but thereafter few early sightings. The period 23rd-29th March saw the first main rush, but the peak week was 30th March to 5th April. The number of later sightings helped to compensate for the earlier shortage, and by the end there were only 5% fewer records than in 1984.

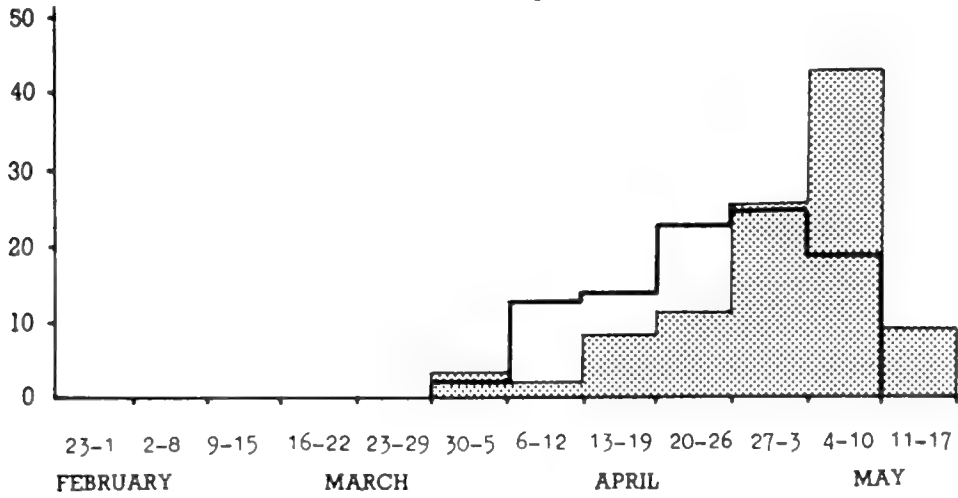
**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Very late: first seen on 26th March, in Norfolk; numbers built up very slowly, and did not reach their peak until early May. As many as 9% of arrivals were reported during the final week of the phone-in, suggesting that more had still to arrive. There were 16% fewer reports than in 1984.



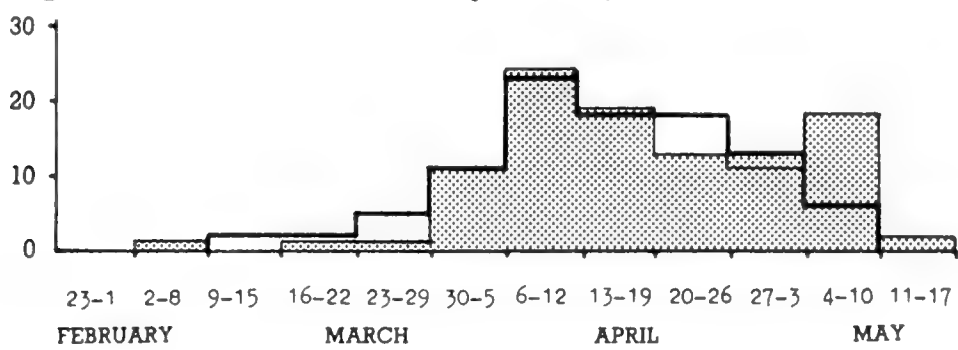
Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Almost two weeks later than average; numbers were very slow to build up, and the peak arrival was not reached until early May. These late arrivals, however, brought the total number of reports to about the same as for 1984.



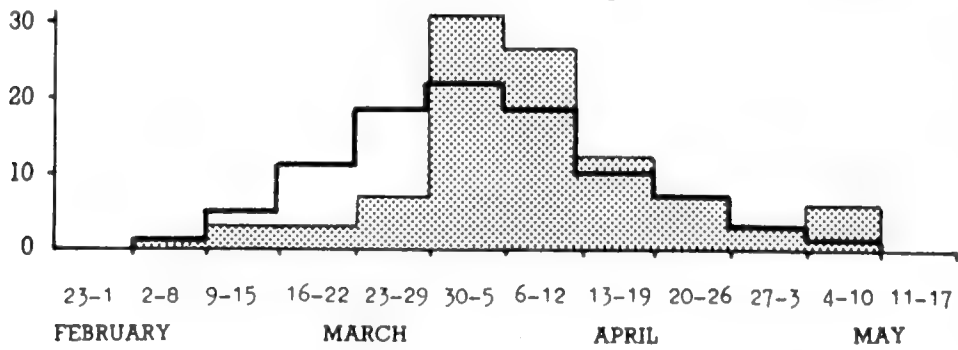
Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Overwintering individuals are frequently reported. Analysis usually shows a surge of records in late March and early April, which is assumed to be the arrival of migrants. This year, no increase was noticed in late March, but the first two weeks of April was the peak arrival period, with a second 'burst' in the first week of May, at a time when many other warblers were arriving. Number of records 47% up on last year.



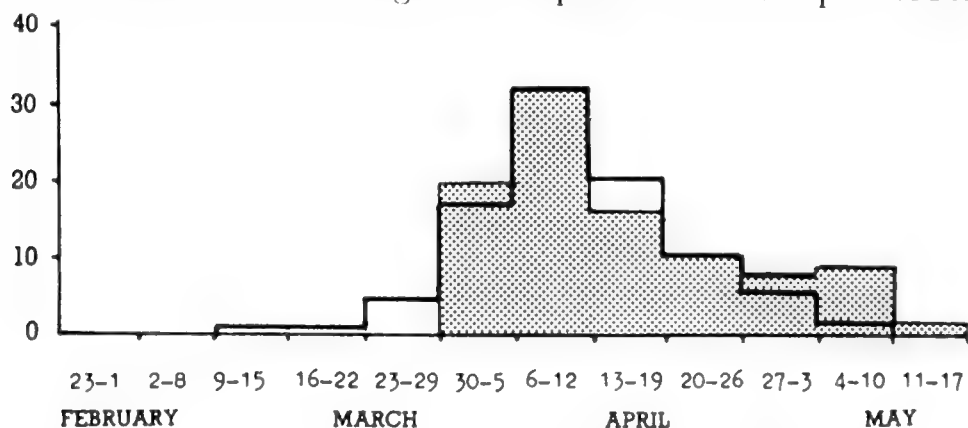
Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

As with Blackcap, the arrival of migrant Chiffchaffs is usually obvious. This year, numbers remained low until early April, two weeks later than average. Peak arrival took place during the first two weeks of April, and, by the end of the survey, there were 2% more reports than in 1984.



Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

First reported on 3rd March, in Somerset, but thereafter a shortage of early reports. Arrival started to be noticed during the first week of April, and the peak was reached the following week. Reports about 2% up on 1984.



Other migrants

For most other species, the YOC received too few records to warrant analysis, but the following observations may be relevant.

Half the number of reports of Corncrakes *Crex crex* were received, in comparison with 1984. Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* were reported more frequently, especially in late April and early May. Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* were reported from mid April onwards, with the peak week being 4th-10th May. Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* were scarce compared with both 1984 and 1983, the largest number being during 4th-10th May.

Fewer Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* were reported with very few before May. Reports of Hoopoes *Upupa epops* were also fewer than last year. Tree Pipits *Anthus trivialis* were about as common as last year, with reports throughout April and early May. Nightingales *Luscinia megarhynchos* were up on last year, with most reports referring to late April and early May. Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* were 20% down on last year, with their arrival period spanning April and the first two weeks of May. Whinchats *Saxicola rubetra* were also down by the same percentage, but there was a noticeable influx between 27th April and 10th May.

Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* generally arrive early, and this year was no exception. The best week for seeing newly arrived Ring Ouzels was undoubtedly 30th March to 5th April, but numbers remained low, and reports were 47% down on last year.

Grasshopper Warblers *Locustella naevia* were up on last year; the peak week, as for so many warblers, was 4th-10th May. Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, too, had an influx that same week, but numbers were substantially down on last year. Lesser Whitethroats *Sylvia curruca* were well up on 1984, but, once again, 4th-10th May was the week to see (or rather hear) them. Garden Warblers *S. borin* were down 30%, but Wood Warblers *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* down only 15%.

The two flycatchers provide interesting comparisons: Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata* were scarce until 4th-10th May, and about 35%

down; Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* were up by around 25%, and arrival was spread from early April until mid May.

Acknowledgments

This paper would not have been possible without the assistance of those who telephoned in their observations, and the volunteers who manned the telephones. For the third year, the project was sponsored by British Telecom.

Summary

The YOC ran its annual phone-in on summer migrant arrival from 19th March to 14th May inclusive. The pattern of migrant arrivals appeared to be significantly different from previous years, and analysis of 15 selected species shows that one was earlier than average, two about the same, and 12 a week or more later than average.

Furthermore, a comparison with the 1984 survey shows that, of 32 species surveyed, ten were reported more frequently, five at about the same level, and 17 had been reported less frequently, despite an increase in the number of observers.

A detailed, illustrated summary of the 1985 phone-in is published by the YOC and is available for 80p, including p & p, from YOC, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Peter Holden, 111 High Street, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NN

Mystery photographs

105 The Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (left) and the other *Acrocephalus* warbler (right) in last month's mystery photograph (plate 183, repeated here as 206) both show pale tips and fringes to

206. First-winter Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (left) and first-winter Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* × Sedge Warbler hybrid, Finland, August 1982 (*Antero Topp*)





207 & 208. First-winter Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* × Sedge Warbler *A. schoenobaenus* hybrid, Finland, 10th August 1982 (Antero Topp)



their flight feathers, and unabraded tail feathers. Thus, both are in fresh plumage and, if they were photographed in the western Palearctic, it must be autumn and the birds must be newly moulted from juvenile to first-winter plumage.

The mystery warbler is slightly larger than the Sedge. It shows a strong supercilium, broad but tapering both in front of and behind the eye, bordered above and to a lesser extent below by a dark lateral crown-stripe and a short dark eye-stripe. This relatively strong head pattern rules out most of the likely species: Reed *A. scirpaceus* has only a slight supercilium; Blyth's Reed *A. dumetorum* has a supercilium that is weak before the eye and, although stronger behind the eye, is very short; that of Paddyfield *A. agricola* flares out behind the eye even more than does this bird's (and Paddyfield has a shorter bill). The head pattern is not unlike that of Great Reed *A. arundinaceus*, but not only is the bird itself too small for that thrush-sized

species, but the sharply pointed bill is also unlike that of Great Reed, which is much thicker and blunter.

Having eliminated the likely common species, we are entitled now to consider the unlikely possibilities. In fact, only one *Acrocephalus* warbler has mainly unstreaked upperparts and this distinctive head pattern: Black-browed Reed Warbler *A. bistrigiceps*. Although never recorded in the western Palearctic, it is a long-distance migrant in the Far East and a potential vagrant to western Europe (it was illustrated recently by Killian Mullarney: *Brit. Birds* 78: 27). As well as its diagnostic head pattern, it does also show pale tips and edges to its secondaries and tertials. This feature is also shown by our mystery bird, which must surely confirm the identification beyond doubt.

An individual with these distinctive features was mist-netted in Finland in August 1982. The first record for the West Palearctic? Since the members of the Finnish ringing group concerned net 3,000-5,000 Sedge, 300-400 Reed, 50-100 Marsh and one or two Blyth's Reed annually, they know their *Acrocephalus* warblers rather well. This warbler was ringed on 7th August (rather early for an Asiatic vagrant) and was followed three days later by a second nearly identical bird (the one in our mystery photograph), next day by a third, and a few days later by a fourth. These three subsequent individuals confirmed the Finnish observers' initial diagnosis that they were dealing with a Reed \times Sedge hybrid; clearly, they had netted all four

209. Mystery photograph 106. Identify the species. Answer next month



of the brood, reared near to their ringing site. The similarity of some features of these hybrids to those of a potential vagrant stresses once again the care that needs to be taken when coming across an unfamiliar bird.

A colour print of the mystery photograph was shown (with no background information) to several members of the Rarities Committee at its meeting on 17th March 1984: three members who know it in Asia suspected Black-browed Reed, two tentatively suggested the correct hybrid answer, and the others were foxed, as perhaps most *BB* readers will have been last month. Hybrids are not frequent, but do need to be remembered whenever the alternative is even rarer.

I am most grateful to Antero Topp for sending the photographs to *British Birds* in the first place and for supplying full details of this fascinating story.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Review of British status and identification of Greenish Warbler



A. R. Dean

The traditional view, that a *Phylloscopus* warbler in Britain which displayed a single wing-bar must be either an Arctic Warbler *P. borealis* or a Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides*, has received support in all but the most recent identification literature. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, a number of decidedly grey, drab *Phylloscopus* warblers, each with a single, narrow, whitish wing-bar, were observed. They were clearly too small for Arctic Warbler, with relatively short bills and the wrong bare-part colours. Knowledge that the species' range was expanding northwest in Europe

encouraged a belief in Britain that these birds were Greenish Warblers. For many observers, the image of the species became based on these rather drab, grey individuals. They tended to appear rather late in the autumn and, during the 1960s, there were two mid-winter records (Perry Oaks, Surrey, and St Agnes, Scilly), remarkable for a species which normally winters in India.

Later in the 1960s, however, doubts began to set in. Greenish Warblers appeared significantly later in the autumn in southern and western Britain than on Fair Isle, where a relatively high percentage of identifications was confirmed by trapping. Most trapped individuals displayed a bright and smart appearance and an intensity of greenish hues which, even allowing for the known variability of the species (Alexander 1955), were difficult to reconcile with the image of the species which was prevalent elsewhere in Britain. Evidence was also mounting that Chiffchaffs *P. collybita* of northern and eastern origin could display a single, quite well-defined wing-bar. On Fair Isle, such individuals were identified regularly in late autumn. In combination, these factors led R. H. Dennis to conclude that northern Chiffchaffs were being misidentified as Greenish Warblers, and his misgivings were conveyed to the Rarities Committee. From about 1970, public awareness of the pitfall of Chiffchaffs with wing-bars became widespread and, significantly, the number of late autumn reports of Greenish Warblers subsequently declined.

In 1981, the Rarities Committee began a review of all previously accepted records. This soon confirmed that the vast majority of records after 1970 was soundly based, but that a substantial percentage of identifications before that time had taken insufficient account of possible confusion with Chiffchaffs of the north European race *P. c. abietinus* and the Siberian race *P. c. tristis*.

Results of the review

Between 1958 and 1970, records of 46 Greenish Warblers had been accepted by the Committee. Of these, 13 (all of which were trapped and examined in the hand) were clearly classic examples of the species. The remaining 33 records required closer examination. Many descriptions concentrated only on the elimination of Arctic Warbler, and gave little or no consideration to the elimination of *abietinus* and *tristis*. Eventually, 20 of the previously accepted records were rejected. A further two remain under review. Thus, of 46 previously accepted records between 1958 and 1970, 24 remain accepted (Appendix 1).

Distribution of accepted records

The number of accepted records between 1958 and 1970 has thus fallen by more than 40%. It is instructive to compare the temporal and geographical distributions of those records which remain accepted in this period with those described by Sharrock (1971) for the period 1958-67 (which were based on all the records accepted at that time), and with the long-term trend as revealed by the entire record for 1958 to 1982.

The pattern of past-accepted records during 1958-67 indicated a peak in September and October. About 30% of the records between August and November were in southwest England and Wales (rising to 45% if Irish records were included), and around 40% on the English east coast between Northumberland and Kent. As with several species of northeasterly origin, however, the later observations were concentrated in the south and west; in north and east Britain a majority of records was in August and September.

The currently perceived seasonal patterns in Britain for 1958-70 and 1958-82 are displayed in fig. 1. (Irish records have been reviewed separately by the Irish Records Panel: Mullarney 1984.) In contrast with the original indication, the revised distribution for 1958-70 is clearly compatible with the longer-term trend, showing both a peak in late August and early September, and relatively few records after the end of September. The geographical distribution for 1958-82 is displayed in fig. 2. Only 18% of the August to November records were in southwest England and Wales, while 60% were on the English east coast between Northumberland and Kent.

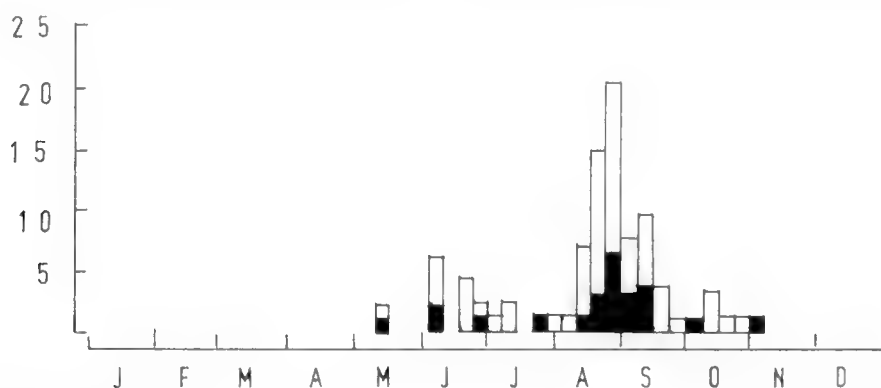


Fig 1. Seasonal pattern of Greenish Warblers *Phylloscopus trochiloides* in Britain during 1958-70 (black) and 1958-82 (black plus unfilled)

Thus, using the revised data, the suggestion of a significant October arrival of Greenish Warblers disappears, while the geographical distribution shows a much more easterly bias. In autumn, Norfolk emerges as the county most regularly visited by Greenish Warblers (17% of the autumn total), followed by Shetland, Humberside, Lincolnshire and Northumberland. The rather few late autumn records still tend to be in the southwest (with four of the eight October and November occurrences in Scilly), but there are single October records from Orkney and Kent. Among the scattering of spring and early summer records, six occurrences in the Isle of Man during June and July (between 1962 and 1981) are of particular note.

Field-characters of Greenish Warbler and its confusion species

Insufficient awareness that Chiffchaffs of the races *abietinus* and *tristis* may display a reasonably well-defined wing-bar seriously impeded the identification of Greenish Warblers during the late 1950s and 1960s. In reality, the appearance of most Chiffchaffs with a wing-bar is, in other respects, markedly different from that of Greenish Warbler, and confusion between these two species should rarely be a problem once the true



Fig 2. Distribution by counties of Greenish Warblers *Phylloscopus trochiloides* in Britain during 1958-82

character of each is appreciated. Among other Palearctic *Phylloscopus* warblers with proven or potential westward vagrancy, Greenish Warbler needs to be distinguished from Green Warbler *P. nitidus*, Two-barred Greenish Warbler *P. plumbeitarsus* (these three species being very closely related), and Arctic Warbler.

At certain times of the year, there is also a possibility of confusion between Greenish Warbler and the Central Asiatic race of Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus humei*, worn adults of which may be superficially similar (personal observation, and Kitson 1980). Perhaps the only non-*Phylloscopus* species with which any of the above may be confused is the Nearctic Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina* (Browne 1960; Doherty 1984; Meek 1984).

The following discussion deals primarily with the principal characters by which Greenish Warbler and 'northern' Chiffchaffs may be distinguished, and then, more briefly, describes the salient characters of other confusion species. It draws heavily on discussion in the files of the Rarities Committee, but is supplemented by an examination of skins and personal field experience of all the relevant species. The discussion is largely comparative, to facilitate discrimination between species. More-formal,

and readily accessible, presentations of biometrics and of plumage and bare-parts characters, are given in tables 1 and 2 for the six most relevant *Phylloscopus* species.

Greenish Warbler and northern Chiffchaffs

Current taxonomy divides the Greenish Warbler into four subspecies (*trochiloides*, *viridanus*, *ludlowi*, and *obscuratus*), with Green Warbler and Two-barred Greenish Warbler recognised as separate but very closely related species (see discussion in Williamson 1967). The rare *viridanus* breeds in northeastern Europe, and west and central Asia. It is replaced by *trochiloides* in much of the Himalayas and western China, by *ludlowi* in the northwestern Himalayas, and by *obscuratus* in northwestern China. In fresh plumage, the races *viridanus* and *trochiloides* are sufficiently different to warrant comment (*trochiloides* having darker upperparts and a much greyer, darker, and more contrasting crown), but only *viridanus* is likely to appear in Britain, and all trapped individuals have been attributed to this subspecies.

The familiar Chiffchaff of Britain and much of western and southern Europe *P. c. collybita* is replaced by *abietinus* in northern and eastern Europe and by *tristis* in Siberia and central Asia (see Williamson 1967 for a more detailed account of the distribution of these and the more southerly races *canariensis*, *exsul* and *ibericus*). The races differ primarily in the extent and prominence of olive and yellow in the plumage. Both hues are at their greatest development on nominate *collybita*, while olive is very limited and yellow entirely lacking (except on the marginal coverts near the alula—‘the bend of the wing’—and on the axillaries) on *tristis*. The race *abietinus* is somewhat intermediate, generally with rather greyer or browner upperparts than *collybita* and rather whiter underparts, but typically retaining some olive on the mantle and a limited yellow suffusion to breast and supercilium. It overlaps in appearance with both *collybita* and *tristis*, and single individuals are frequently racially unassignable (Svensson 1984).

The form *tristis* is much greyer or browner than *collybita* on the upperparts, and much whiter on breast and belly. Some populations have a deep buff wash on the flanks, but others are more evenly whitish. The rump, remiges and rectrices may show fairly distinct olive fringes, but, at its most distinctive, *tristis* is strikingly grey-and-white compared with *collybita*.

Identifiable ‘northern’ Chiffchaffs are thus rather drab, grey or brown, with olive and yellow either limited or absent, and with comparatively white underparts. Autumn individuals in fresh plumage (which may be either adults or first-winters) frequently display a long (but relatively narrow and curved) wing-bar, formed by ill-defined greyish-white tips to all the greater coverts; occasionally, this feature is prominent enough to persist throughout the winter.

In contrast, Greenish Warblers in fresh plumage have distinctly olive-green upperparts. In combination with the short, straight, but often quite broad wing-bar, formed by clear-cut yellowish-white tips to the four to six outermost greater coverts, this produces an appearance on unabraded individuals which is unmatched by any Chiffchaff. There is sometimes a second, narrower bar across the tips of the median coverts. The complete

Table 1. Measurements (in mm) and wing-characters of Greenish Warblers *Phylloscopus trochiloides* and five confusion species (after Williamson 1967 and Svensson 1984)

Attribute	Greenish <i>P.t.</i> <i>viridanus</i>	Green <i>P.nitidus</i>	Two-barred Greenish <i>P. plumbeitarsus</i>	Arctic <i>P. borealis</i>	Yellow- browed <i>P. inornatus</i> <i>humei</i>	Chiffchaff <i>P. collybita</i> <i>abietinus</i>	<i>tristis</i>
WING-LENGTH							
Range	11-13.5	11-15	11-13.5	12-16	9.5-12	10-13	10-13
Mean	12.21	12.87	12.26	13.82	10.73	11.58	11.58
TERTIAL-LENGTH							
Range	53-68	55-69	52-65	57-74	49-64	50-72	50-70
Mean	60.34	61.94	58.60	65.42	56.50	60.63	60.37
TERTIAL-LENGTH							
Range	39-54	40-53	38-51	38-55	34-48	39-58	39-59
Mean	46.41	46.16	44.49	46.33	41.16	48.14	49.04
WING-FORMULA							
Extension of 1st p beyond pc	+ 6 to + 10	+ 4 to + 10	+ 6 to + 10	- 2 to + 3	+ 4 to + 9	+ 4 to + 9	+ 4 to + 9
Usual position of 2nd p	7th-8th or = 7th	6th-7th or = 7th	7th-9th or = 7th	5th-6th or = 6th	7th-9th	6th-8th	7th-8th
Emargination of 6th p	Yes	Slight	Yes	No	Yes	Yes but may be slight	Yes but may be slight
Ratio of primary extension to length of exposed tertials	1:2	1:2	1:2	2:3	1:2	1:2	1:2

moult of Greenish Warbler takes place in the winter quarters, between February and April, but there is a partial moult, involving the head and body feathers, on or near the breeding grounds, generally in July and August. Some adults between June and early August (and individuals of all ages in mid-winter) may be sufficiently worn to lose much of the fresh, olive tone to their upperparts, and become relatively dull, grey-brown. On such worn individuals, however, the wing-coverts are generally abraded, and the wing-bar is broken and irregular, sometimes visible on only one wing, or entirely absent. Thus, any warbler which has a complete, unabraded wing-bar, but which is decidedly dull grey-brown on the upperparts, is unlikely to be a Greenish.

In fresh plumage, Greenish Warblers, particularly first-winters, do show a distinct greyish sheen to the upperparts, but this appears as a glaze over the basic, fresh olive coloration, and enhances rather than diminishes the smart, greenish appearance.

Greenish Warblers in worn plumage and lacking a visible wing-bar can be confusing, but can usually be identified by a combination of features. Most important are head pattern, colour of bare-parts, and call. Greenish shows a long, well-defined, yellowish-white supercilium which is relatively

broad, arches above the eye, and tends to end in a flare or a slight inflection about mid-way between eye and nape. Depending on posture, the supercilium may turn up or down at the rear. A rather large eye, a comparatively broad and well-defined, dark eye-stripe, and mottled olive and yellowish ear-coverts with darker lower border, complete a rather bold face pattern.

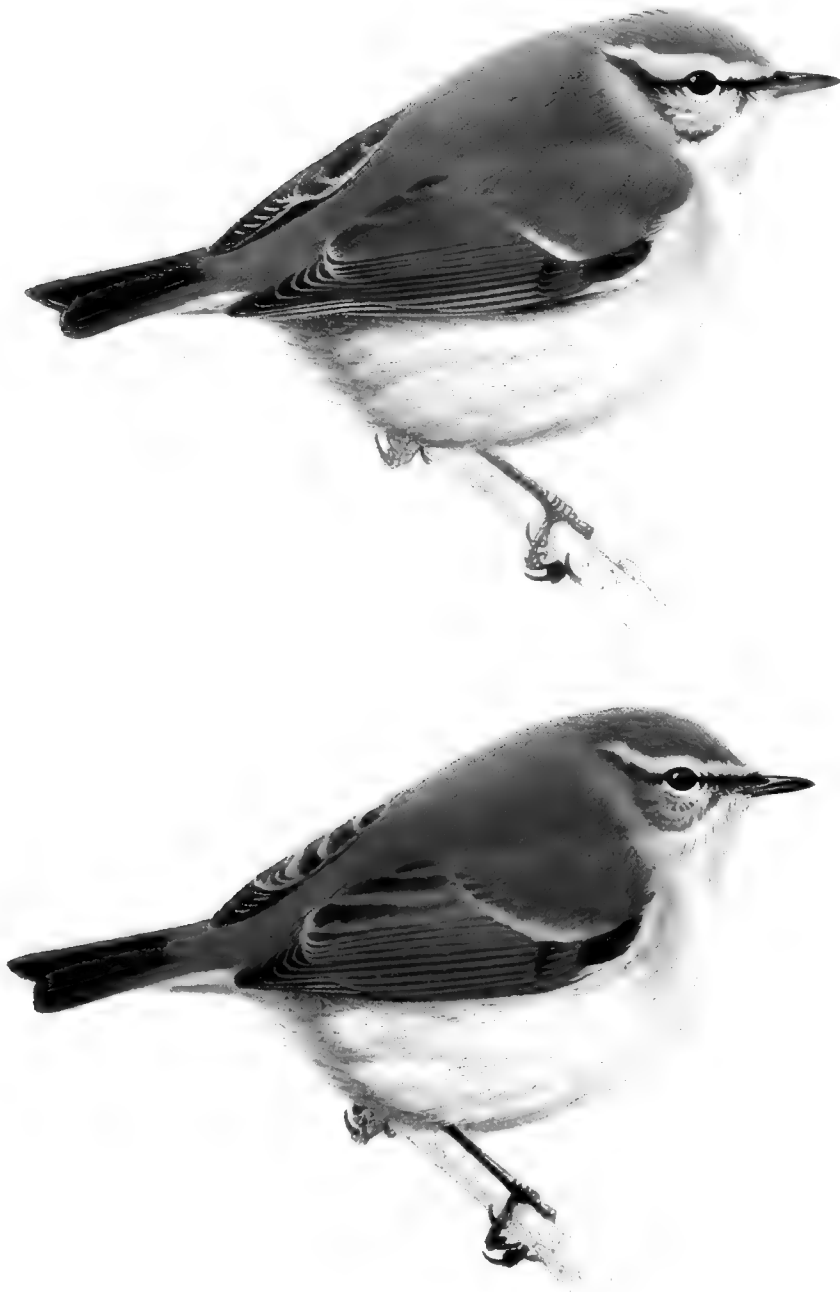
The usually duller supercilium of Chiffchaff is relatively short, narrow and less well-defined. Some individuals from Siberia display a longer and whiter mark, but it invariably lacks depth. A narrow dark eye-stripe runs above basically plain ear-coverts, and there is nearly always a contrasting, neat, pale eye-ring, which is especially prominent below the eye. A delicate expression results, which, especially on the race *tristis*, is enhanced by the rather small, fine, and frequently all-dark bill. The bolder, more open expression of the Greenish Warbler is complemented by an (on average) rather deeper and broader bill, which displays a characteristically pale lower mandible: this is often entirely yellowish to pinkish-orange, though the extreme tip is sometimes a little darker, and may give the bill a slightly upturned appearance.

Once known, the call of Greenish is quite distinct from any utterance of Chiffchaff, but the rather different call of *tristis* and easterly populations of *abietinus*, compared with nominate *collybita*, can confuse the unwary. The principal call of Greenish Warbler is unequivocally disyllabic; the inflection on the second syllable is usually, but not invariably, upward. To some ears, it has a chirruped quality, recalling a cheerful, high-pitched sparrow *Passer*, or the soft, conversational call of Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*. Transcriptions inevitably vary, but 'chee-wee', 'tsree-wee' and 'tiss-yip' convey the basic form and character. Chiffchaffs of the race *tristis* and more easterly populations of *abietinus* give a high-pitched, off-key 'pseet' or 'peep' (often compared with the distress call of a young chicken), which is so different from the well-known, plaintive 'hweet' of *P. c. collybita* (and more westerly *abietinus*: Lars Svensson *in litt.*) that it frequently misleads observers unfamiliar with the call. A shrill 'sweeoo' is also recorded for autumn Chiffchaffs, but whether this is confined to one subspecies remains unclear.

Other, less diagnostic differences may be discerned. The underparts of Greenish are basically clean and white, but, at close range, diffuse yellow mottling and streaking may be observed on breast and belly, and a greyish suffusion on the flanks. Chiffchaffs of the race *abietinus* are generally more obviously buff-toned on the underparts; *tristis* often show buff on the flanks (and this can be prominent), but other individuals are more uniformly whitish. A limited yellow suffusion is normal on *abietinus*, but, apart from the bend of the wing and the axillaries, is never present on classic *tristis*.

The olive-green fringes to the remiges and rectrices are a constant and generally conspicuous feature of Greenish Warbler; the edgings to the secondaries frequently combine to produce a bright panel on the folded wing. On Chiffchaff, these fringes are rarely so intensely olive, but, on *tristis* particularly, the deficiency of olive elsewhere in the plumage can increase their prominence.

The underwing and bend of the wing of Chiffchaffs are usually bright yellow (though on some *tristis* are much whiter), while on Greenish Warbler



210. Top, Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* in fresh first-winter plumage; bottom, Chiffchaff *P. collybita* with characters of eastern race *tristis* in fresh first-winter plumage (Killian Mullarney)

the bend of the wing is pale yellow, and the underwing-coverts and axillaries are yellowish-white or occasionally silvery-white.

Smoky-grey outer webs to the outermost tail feathers of Greenish Warbler produce the effect of a pale fringe, but, since the lack of overlapping feathers can produce translucency in the outer tail of almost any *Phylloscopus*, this feature must be used with care.

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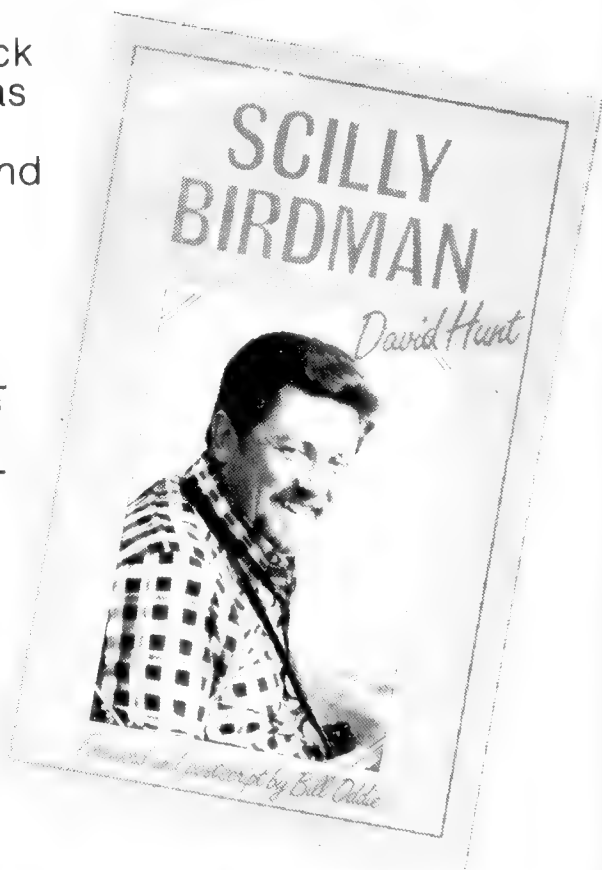
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The legs of Greenish Warbler are typically grey-brown, less blackish than Chiffchaff (particularly *tristis*), and, especially when viewed from behind, may appear surprisingly pale (see Arctic Warbler).

A minor feature which may be useful on difficult individuals involves the alula. This is rather uniformly dark, almost blackish, on Chiffchaff, and contrasts with the paler-fringed primary coverts. On Greenish, the alula feathers are dark, but olive-toned on the outer web, and show only slight contrast with the olive-fringed primary coverts.

GREEN WARBLER

This species, which breeds from northern Turkey east to Afghanistan, and winters in southern India and Sri Lanka, has already been reported in Britain (*Brit. Birds* 76: 598). The possibility of its occurrence, and that of the Two-barred Greenish Warbler, was hinted at by Alexander as long ago as 1955. Greenish, Green, and Two-barred Greenish Warblers are very closely related species which have been regarded as conspecific by various authors (see Williamson 1967). Well-marked individuals, however, are not difficult to identify in the field.

Although, as in many *Phylloscopus* species, females are smaller than males, the Green Warbler is, on average, slightly more robust than Greenish of the race *viridanus*, with a longer and sturdier bill (which at extreme may approach that of Arctic Warbler). The upperparts are a bright, clean olive, resembling Wood Warbler *P. sibilatrix*, and lacking the greyish tones of Greenish. The supercilium is longer than that typical of *viridanus*, and is a brighter, purer yellow. The wing-bar is also more distinctly yellow and, in fresh plumage, there is more frequently the suggestion of a second wing-bar on the median coverts. On first-winter individuals, a uniform yellowish wash from chin to belly (the vent is whiter) extends characteristically from the throat onto the ear-coverts which, therefore, lack the more mottled appearance (and usually the darker lower border) of Greenish. Pale ear-coverts emphasise the dark olive eye-stripe. Adult Green Warblers are more variable. Many are far less yellow below than the popular image, and may be little different from Greenish in the basic colour of the underparts (S. C. Madge *in litt.*). Yellow is, however, usually evident on the throat, ear-coverts and supercilium.

To some ears, the call is subtly different from that of Greenish, with a harder, more strident delivery, and a terminal consonant.

TWO-BARRED GREENISH WARBLER

Darker, richer olive upperparts, and whiter underparts (almost lacking yellow) give Two-barred Greenish Warbler a rather more austere, less fresh appearance than *viridanus* (though nominate *trochiloides* may have a similar upperparts colour). The supercilium is longer even than on *nitidus*, and frequently turns up at the end to produce a terminal flourish. The greater-covert wing-bar is whitish and very broad when fresh (up to 4 mm) and, except in very worn plumage, there is usually an obvious, though frequently broken, second wing-bar across the tips of the median coverts. There may be yellowish flecks to tips of lesser coverts in fresh plumage (Williamson 1967).

Table 2. Distinguishing characters of Greenish Warbler

	Greenish <i>P.t. viridanus</i>	Green <i>P. nitidus</i>	Two-barred <i>P. plumbeitarsus</i>
Size (see table 1)		Slightly larger than <i>viridanus</i>	
Bill size (see table 1)		Slightly longer and deeper than <i>viridanus</i>	
Upper mandible	Dark brown	As <i>viridanus</i>	As <i>viridanus</i>
Lower mandible	All or mostly flesh to orange	As <i>viridanus</i> , sometimes brighter orange	
Legs and feet	Grey-brown to dark straw; soles (and sometimes rear of tibia) yellowish	As <i>viridanus</i>	As <i>viridanus</i>
Crown	Slightly greyer than mantle		
Upperparts	Fresh olive, with grey sheen; duller when worn	Relatively bright 'Wood Warbler' green in best examples, but some more like <i>viridanus</i>	Darker than <i>viridanus</i> , and less grey
Underparts	Clean whitish ground colour, suffused yellow and grey (flanks)	Pronounced yellow tone from throat to belly on 1st W, but often only throat and upper breast on adult	Cold whitish, little or no yellow
Supercilium	Broad, long and ending in flare; yellowish-white	Longer and yellower than <i>viridanus</i>	Longer and whiter than <i>nitidus</i> ; terminal flourish
Eye-stripe	Broad	Broad	Broad
Ear-coverts	Weakly mottled olive and yellow, but less so than Arctic	Suffused yellow, rather pale	
Greater-covert wing-bar	Short, broad, straight; yellow-white	Broader and yellower than <i>viridanus</i>	Long and very broad; whitish
Median-covert wing-bar	Infrequent	Frequent in fresh plumage	Constant, though often broken
Alula	Little contrast with primary coverts		
Underwing	Pale yellow to silvery-white		
Principal call	Disyllabic 'chee-wee'	Similar to, but slightly harder and sharper than, <i>viridanus</i> : 'tchee-rik'	Similar to <i>viridanus</i> : 'che-wee'

Trochiloides and five confusion species

Arctic <i>borealis</i>	Yellow-browed <i>P. inornatus</i> <i>humei</i>	Chiffchaff <i>P. collybita</i> <i>abietinus</i>	<i>tristis</i>
	Smallest	Smallest	Smallest
Longest and most rusty	Smallest	Smaller and finer than <i>viridanus</i>	Similar to <i>abietinus</i>
Brown	Dark brown	Blackish-brown	Blackish
Yellowish with darker tip	Dark brown, extreme base paler	Blackish-brown with paler base	Mostly blackish
Like horn legs, orange-yellowish tip	Dark brown or greyish-brown	Dark brown to blackish	Blackish
Greyer than mantle	Greyer than mantle		
Deep olive, less saturated than <i>viridanus</i>	Mealy grey-olive	Browner, less olive than <i>viridanus</i>	Brown or grey-brown, lacking olive on mantle
Creamy-white, mottled and streaked with yellow and grey	Dull buff-white, little or no yellow	Buffy-white, often with a little yellow	Pale and whitish, but often buff on flanks. Never any yellow
Very long, with ward or downward extension onto nape feather; yellowish- white	Very long; whitish or buffy-white	Relatively short and narrow; buffy-white, often tinged yellow	Can be quite long, but lacks depth; whitish- buff. Never any yellow
Broad	Broad	Narrow	Narrow
Longly mottled grey and yellow		Relatively uniform	Relatively uniform
Creamy	Broad; buff-white	Long, but narrow and curved; greyish-white	Similar to (and more frequent than) <i>abietinus</i>
Regular in fresh plumage	Only in fresh plumage	None	None
		Obvious contrast with primary coverts	As <i>abietinus</i>
		Relatively bright yellow	Usually as <i>abietinus</i> , rarely whiter
Short, hard metallic 'k'	Recalls <i>viridanus</i> , but a little weaker and longer: 'chee-reep'	Monosyllabic 'pseep' (eastern birds only)	As <i>abietinus</i>

The depth of the principal wing-bar and the presence of a second wing-bar can suggest Yellow-browed Warbler *P. i. inornatus*, but the upperparts and underparts lack the yellowish tinge (looking colder), and the tertials are plain, without the pale fringes of Yellow-browed. Structurally, Two-barred Greenish is close to *viridanus*, and is thus slightly larger, longer-billed, and longer-tailed than Yellow-browed Warbler. The call is much like Greenish Warbler: a rather loose 'che-wee'.

ARCTIC WARBLER

The Arctic Warbler is larger, heavier-headed, sturdier-necked, and longer-billed than any of the previous species, and usually looks long-winged. The undertail-coverts can appear longer than in the 'Greenish' group, which, in conjunction with the longer wings, may make it look deceptively short-tailed.

The distinguishing features of this species are quite well documented (e.g. Robertson 1984): long supercilium extending to the nape, frequently turning sharply up or down (depending on posture) at the rear; long, relatively robust bill; comparatively frequent suggestion of a second wing-bar in fresh plumage; deeper, richer green upperparts than *viridanus*; and paler legs, often with decidedly yellow-orange feet. Due allowance must, however, be made for light conditions, as Greenish Warblers in Dorset and Kent in September 1975 showed apparently long bills and pale legs in the field, and briefly deceived very experienced observers: both were eventually trapped and found to have normal bare-parts in the hand. It should be borne in mind that, from some angles, the pale lower mandible of Greenish Warbler can exaggerate bill size and, although in fact relatively short, the bill can be quite broad at the base. Generally, however, structure, and pale legs and feet, should serve to distinguish Arctic from both Greenish and Two-barred Greenish Warbler.

The ear-coverts on Arctic Warbler show an almost unmarked area immediately below the eye and are heavily mottled elsewhere, and consequently appear pale-centred; they are rather more variegated than on Greenish and much more so than on Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler *P. trochilus*. The tip (and inner web) of the three outermost tail feathers are narrowly outlined with white, which can result in the suggestion of white corners or white tip to the tail. Among *Phylloscopus* warblers, the call is unique: a hard, metallic 'dzik', quite unlike the calls of its congeners, but similar to at least one call of Tennessee Warbler (Meek 1984).

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER

In fresh plumage, Yellow-browed Warbler of the race *humei* usually shows at least a suggestion of a second wing-bar, while the greater-covert bar is decidedly broad and long; the tertials show pale fringes, though less pronounced than on nominate *inornatus*. The median-covert and tertial markings are rapidly abraded, however, and, in summer and late autumn, *humei* often appears as a *Phylloscopus* warbler with one wing-bar and plain tertials (exceptionally, nominate *inornatus* may become sufficiently worn to

display only one wing-bar and rather plain tertials: see Quinn & Clement 1979). The greater-covert bar is highlighted by a dark 'shadow' formed by rather dark bases to the remiges, and this provides a useful distinguishing mark (S. C. Madge *in litt.*). Even in fresh plumage, the green component in the upperparts of *humei* is limited (frequently absent on the crown) and the general tone soon reduces to a dowdy, mealy, grey-brown. The supercilium and underparts are a correspondingly dull buffy-white, deficient or lacking in yellow, and the secondaries, though pale-fringed, show neither the olive panel of Greenish nor the yellowish panel of *inornatus*. Yellow-browed Warblers of the race *humei* are smaller and rounder-bodied than Greenish, with finer, darker bills (pale only at the extreme base), and rather shorter tails, which extend a relatively short distance beyond the tip of the wings. Although very slightly larger than *inornatus*, *humei* has the same compact, almost *Regulus*-like appearance, and differentiation from worn individuals of that race is the real field problem (start with the rather darker bill: Kitson 1980). The call suggests the 'Greenish' group rather than *inornatus*, being a little weaker than—but very reminiscent of—*viridanus*.

TENNESSEE WARBLER

The superficial similarity of Tennessee Warbler to a *Phylloscopus* warbler has been commented upon previously (e.g. Browne 1960). Immatures particularly are rather bright olive-green (or even lime-green) above, and distinctly yellow below, apart from the white ventral area; they have one, and sometimes a suggestion of a second, wing-bar, and can recall a cross between an Arctic Warbler and a Wood Warbler (Meek 1984), or a Green Warbler (Doherty 1984). Apart from their rather stockier proportions and more dagger-shaped bill, they are best distinguished by the density of colour, the diffuse, short supercilium, the poorly defined eye-stripe (together producing a much more bland expression than most *Phylloscopus*), the greyish primaries with white crescents at the tips of the inner feathers, the fineness of the wing-bars, and the rather grey legs. The call is reported to be a penetrating 'zit', recalling Firecrest *R. ignicapillus* (Broad 1982), but also suggestive of Arctic Warbler (Meek 1984).

Acknowledgments

Whether or not their records of Greenish Warbler remain accepted, all observers who have submitted descriptions to the Rarities Committee have contributed to an understanding of the field-characters of this and allied species. R. H. Dennis (who first sensed the need for a review), P. J. Grant, S. C. Madge and K. Mullarney provided valuable comments on a draft of the text, while L. Jonsson and L. Svensson discussed and emphasised the difficulties in subspecific identification of Chiffchaffs. Access to skins at the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) at Tring was kindly arranged by P. R. Colston. The colour illustrations were specially painted by K. Mullarney.

Summary

Evidence that, prior to 1970, northern Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita abietinus/tristis* displaying a single wing-bar were being misidentified as Greenish Warblers *P. trochiloides* has led to a review by the Rarities Committee of all previously accepted records of Greenish Warbler and a re-evaluation of the identification criteria. Twenty British records prior to 1970 and one

Appendix 1. Records of Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* in Britain in 1958-70**Still accepted**

Gibraltar Point	Lincolnshire	3.9.58
Lundy	Devonshire	2-6.11.58
Spurn	Humberside	4-5.6.60
Skokholm	Dyfed	31.8.60
Spurn	Humberside	4.9.60
Fair Isle	Shetland	7.9.60
Fair Isle	Shetland	19.8.61
Skokholm	Dyfed	30-31.8.61
Dungeness	Kent	9.6.62
Calf of Man	Man	27.7.62
St Agnes	Scilly (two)	15-21.9.62
Sandwich Bay	Kent	30.8.63
Bamburgh	Northumberland	4-7.9.65
St Agnes	Scilly	7-14.10.65
Bamburgh	Northumberland	30.8.66
Spurn	Humberside	25.6.67
Holme	Norfolk	12.9.67
Holkham	Norfolk	17.9.67
Holme	Norfolk	26.8.68
Fair Isle	Shetland	29.8.69
Hartlepool	Cleveland	16.5.70
Fair Isle	Shetland	21-24.8.70
Bamburgh	Northumberland	22.8.70

Previously accepted, but no longer considered certain

Wisbech	Lincolnshire	23.11.58
Eastbourne	East Sussex	10.9.59
Perry Oaks	Surrey	1.1-26.2.61
Fair Isle	Shetland	4.9.61
Dungeness	Kent	24.9.61
Redcar	Cleveland	20.10.61
Selsey Bill	West Sussex	27.9.62
Eastbourne	East Sussex	19.10.62
St Agnes	Scilly	26-27.11.63
Dollis Hill	Greater London	1.10.64
Verne Common	Dorset	21.11.64
St Agnes	Scilly	20-31.12.64 and staying into 1965
Eastbourne	East Sussex	17.9.65
St Abb's Head	Borders	15.10.66
Redcar	Cleveland	6-13.11.66
Hartlepool	Cleveland	16-17.9.67
St Agnes	Scilly	21.9.67
Wells	Norfolk	24.9.67
St Agnes	Scilly	29-30.10.67
Spurn	Humberside	19.10.68

Post-1970 record previously accepted, but no longer considered certain

Dungeness	Kent	26.9.72
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Previously accepted, now still under review

Easington	Humberside	28-30.8.68
Holme	Norfolk	9.11.68
Wells	Norfolk	21.8.77

post-1970 record are now rejected, while three records remain under review. The records which remain accepted indicate an earlier autumn arrival and a more easterly geographical bias than had hitherto been suggested. A clearer, though probably not yet complete, picture of the field-characters of Greenish Warbler, northern Chiffchaffs, and several other possible confusion species has emerged.

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Notes

Fulmars attacking and killing Little Auk At 16.05 GMT on 13th February 1983, at Marsden, Tyne & Wear, B. C. Forrester, J. Knox, A. Murray and I were watching a Little Auk *Alle alle* in calm conditions 400m offshore. It appeared to be exhausted and unable to fly. After about 15 minutes, it swam near to a flock of about 40 Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* resting on the sea. Two Fulmars separated from the flock, swam towards the auk now only a few metres away, and both proceeded to peck voraciously at it; the auk promptly dived, only to be attacked again when it resurfaced a short distance away. This went on for at least 20 minutes. At 16.40 hours, in fading light, the Fulmar flock flew off, leaving the two still pecking and pulling at the distressed auk, at times lifting it from the water. Five minutes later, the two remaining Fulmars flew off, leaving the Little Auk underside up and obviously dead.

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Pintail migrating with Brent Geese At about 16.30 GMT on 15th October 1982, about 40 km out of Harwich, the ferry from the Hook of Holland was overtaken by two groups of dark-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* flying in a WSW direction roughly towards Horsey Island, Essex. One group of 11 geese, flying in rough 'V' formation, was led by a female Pintail *Anas acuta*. The speed of the geese was leisurely, and the wingbeats regular and relaxed, though purposeful. The Pintail appeared to be having difficulty in flying slowly enough to keep in contact with the Brents: from time to time she dived almost 30 m, veering sharply from side to side, and at other times 'towered', before resuming her position at the head of the formation.

I estimated the wind-speed at 20 mph (32 kph), the speed of the ship at 13 mph (20 kph), and the overtaking speed at 5 mph (8 kph), and concluded that the air-speed of the flock was therefore about 35-40 mph (56-64 kph). Sir Peter Scott (verbally) suggested that the Pintail may have become lost or separated from erstwhile companions and taken up with the Brent Geese, whose direction of migration, if not their speed, suited her.

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Instances of one species becoming 'caught up' in a migrating party of another are perhaps not rare: examples include Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* with Little Auks *Alle alle*; and an Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* with Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius pomarinus* (1977, *The Natural History of Cape Clear Island*). EDS

Pair of apparently adult male Kestrels Homosexual behaviour has been described for several bird species, for example Greylag Goose *Anser anser* (Fabricius 1981), gulls *Larus* and Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (Nethersole-Thompson 1979). In most cases, the species concerned show little or no sexual dimorphism, although such behaviour has also been recorded among male ducks (Anatidae). On 13th March 1982, at Nivå, Zealand, Denmark, I came across three adult male Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* performing territorial flights simultaneously, rather close to each other. Two behaved as a pair, displaying close to each other several times during a couple of hours, each period of display lasting for a few minutes; they also performed territorial flights on their own, but only for short periods. On 14th March, I revisited the area. The same 'pair' was performing the same fighting several times in the morning. In one instance, one of the male Kestrels landed at a perch, while the other displayed vigorously around it; after about 30 seconds, the displaying male landed close to the perched male and a few seconds later a copulation between the two, lasting 10-15 seconds, took place, the Kestrels calling eagerly while copulating. On several visits during March and April 1982, I did not observe these two males again, but came across several 'normal' pairs of Kestrels in the area.

I do not know of any case of homosexual behaviour among raptors, and neither Newton (1979) nor Cramp & Simmons (1980) mentioned it. Avian homosexual behaviour seems most frequently to take place among species with little or no sexual dimorphism.

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Dr C. H. Fry has commented: 'We do not know that both were males, only that both were in male plumage. It is improbable, but possible, that one was a male-plumaged female and identified as such by "her" mate.' Derek Goodwin has added: 'The observations indicate that either two males or (but I think less probable) a male and a female in *completely* male-type plumage were paired together.' This is in my opinion of much more interest than the copulation or attempted one between the two males, as male birds of many species may attempt to copulate with many creatures or artifacts that supply one or more features in common with a soliciting female.' Eds

Moorhens eating apples The Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* is described as being able to climb freely along branches and on foliage, and its diet as including plums *Prunus*, pears *Pyrus* and crab apples *Malus sylvestris* (*BWP*). At St Cross, Winchester, Hampshire, young Moorhens in my orchard eat fallen apples as a regular diet, and one individual in 1983 habitually climbed into the top branches to consume unpicked fruit. Best ripe russets are preferred, and cooking apples are ignored.

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BWP lists many fruits, including crab apple, but regular eating of apples is not inferred. Eds



211. Juvenile Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* in apple tree. Hampshire, September 1983 (James Hancock)

A white-headed juvenile Long-tailed Skua Juvenile Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* show a great range of general head and underpart coloration, from all-dark to extremely pale. An example of the latter was seen approaching during a seawatch from St Ives, Cornwall, on 3rd

September 1984. Head-on views showed a very grey bird with a gleaming white head. Some observers even hesitated initially to identify it as a skua. It then rested on the sea about 300m offshore; floating buoyantly like a small gull *Larus*, and looking largely white. Such very distinctive individuals are described or illustrated in some books—for example *BWP* and Harrison (1983, *Seabirds: an identification guide*)—but wider awareness of their occurrence may be useful.

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Possible 'Eastern' Common Gull on Fair Isle On 18th August 1984, on Fair Isle, Shetland, I was counting a group of Common Gulls *Larus canus*, when I noticed that the upperparts of one of the adults were much darker than those of the others. The darker individual was also slightly larger and structurally 'stronger-looking' than the rest. The following features were noted:

<p>SIZE: slightly larger and heavier-looking than other Common Gulls present, most noticeably around head, with longer, stronger-looking bill. Wings appeared longer, with large prominent mirrors, giving bird very attenuated appearance. Legs slightly longer and thicker-looking, making bird appear to stand taller than its companions.</p>	<p>COLORATION: greyish areas of normal Common Gulls replaced by dark slaty grey, tending in tone towards the greyness of Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>L. fuscus</i> of the race <i>graellsii</i>. Other plumage and bare parts similar in coloration to those of other Common Gulls.</p>
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Reference to the literature revealed that these features most closely fitted the central Russian, western and central Siberian subspecies *L. canus heinei*, described by Dementiev & Gladkov (1951) as 'The largest form of Grey [= Common] Gull, with long wings and long, powerful bill. Overall tone darker than in Western subspecies . . .' *BWP* describes *heinei* as conspicuously darker on upperparts than the nominate race, and gives a series of measurements showing clearly that *heinei* averages larger on all measurements. *BWP* also suggests that some *heinei* reach northwest Europe in winter. It seems possible that the Fair Isle individual was *heinei*, and that wider awareness of the field characters of that race may lead to better knowledge of its status in western Europe.

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S. C. Madge has pointed out that the 1982 'Ringing Report' (*Ringing & Migration* 4: 304), commenting on the recovery near Andreapol, USSR (56° 38'N 32° 27'W), in May 1982 of a Common Gull ringed in Sussex in January 1981, stated the opinion that 'This, together with previous winter-ringed birds reported from Novgorod, Vologda and Arkhangelsk, suggest that some Russian birds of the race *heinei* reach us in winter.' Eds

Arctic Terns incubating Ringed Plover eggs to hatching In 1982, one pair of Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula* bred on Coquet Island, Northumberland, a 6.5-ha site which holds large breeding populations of terns *Sterna* and Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, plus smaller numbers of several other species of seabirds. The plovers frequented a stony beach during the early part of May. On 20th May, their nest scrape was found, containing four eggs, at the top of the beach, at the base of a low bank and partly obscured by hanging grass. This beach was also used by about 80

pairs of Arctic Terns *S. paradisaea*, whose earliest eggs were seen on 18th May. On 24th, the four warm plover eggs were still present, but on 26th two Ringed Plovers were seen in another part of the island; initially, these were thought to be a second pair, but in the light of subsequent events it is likely that they were those from the first site. On 29th May, the plover scrape held only three plover eggs, but also two tern eggs; the situation was the same on 1st June. On 8th June, the scrape held two tern and two plover eggs, one of the latter having a small hole through which the chick could be seen moving; a newly hatched plover chick was about 60cm away, beside two eggs in another tern scrape. The following day, the oldest chick was not seen, but the second chick was in the original scrape and the third chick was about to hatch, being seen through the hole in its egg shell. Adverse weather prevented subsequent visits until 17th June, when none of the plover chicks was seen; the tern eggs had hatched and the chicks were by the scrape.

D. J. RADFORD

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Derek Goodwin has commented as follows: 'Obviously the "pot egg principle" was working here. In some, perhaps all, species that make several scrapes, it seems to depend largely on chance which scrape the first egg is laid in, but once it has been laid the rest are normally laid beside it. Where two species which both lay in similarly placed scrapes and do not exclude each other from their territories are very abundant, the result is often mixed clutches which are incubated by the more dominant or more eager incubator of the two.' Eds

Swallows and Sand Martins pecking at tarmac road On 10th September 1982, at Ross Links, Northumberland, from a parked car, my wife and I saw a group of three Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and a Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* settle on a narrow track about 40m away. We could see very clearly that they began to peck deliberately at the tarmac surface, as if picking up food, though we were unable actually to see anything in their bills. During the subsequent half hour, more small groups of Swallows and once about 25 Swallows and a Sand Martin behaved in this way. On each occasion, they were on the ground for perhaps only 30 seconds at a time. The sky was overcast, with a light wind, and the ground was dry. There are previous records of Swallows feeding from the ground or low vegetation (see *Brit. Birds* 74: 98 and comment) and, as I have seen them feeding on insects on close-grazed grass, I assumed that on this occasion they were picking insects from the track, which on each side was edged with short grass and then a hedge. Close inspection, however, revealed no insect or other form of life, the only loose matter being pieces of straw and chaff and dry dust. I can only assume that the Swallows and Sand Martins were picking up small pieces of grit; the alternative, that they were picking up pieces of chaff, seems improbable.

P. J. OLIVER

1 Albany Court, Palmer Street, London SW1

Although inconclusive, we publish this note to prompt careful observation and reporting of future similar incidents. Eds

Unusual Swallow nest On 6th June 1982, at Stanford Reservoir,

Leicestershire, I located a new nest containing five eggs of Swallow *Hirundo rustica*. Positioned about 6m above ground on a ledge at the apex of a large tractor shed and wood store, the nest contained no mud whatsoever, but consisted wholly of untidy straw, with some fine hair lining, and looked exactly like that of the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*. The young hatched a week later and, on 27th June, they had red gorgets clearly visible and were capable of leaving the nest.

J. G. CRANFIELD

42 Dunton Road, Broughton Astley, Leicestershire LE9 6NB

Dr C. J. Bibby has pointed out the possibility that this was the nest of a House Sparrow, taken over by the Swallows. Eds

Swallow with no feet At 19.10 GMT on 2nd September 1981, while mist-netting Swallows *Hirundo rustica* near Barnsley, South Yorkshire, an adult female was caught which had no feet and virtually no legs. There was no trace whatsoever of a tibia or tarsus on the left; only a withered stump approximately 0.5cm long remained of the right tibia, with a trace of old thread or strand of wool firmly embedded in it. The Swallow's weight of 20.6g was about average, and its general condition was no different from that of other Swallows caught that evening. It had bred in the summer, as a brood-patch was detected; it is therefore presumed that the legs and feet were lost in the spring or summer of 1981, in previous (if any) breeding seasons, or even as a nestling. On release, the Swallow flew towards overhead telegraph wires and landed on a wire with surprisingly little difficulty, only briefly fluttering its wings, initially to gain balance and later when other Swallows settled nearby. After five minutes, it flew off in the direction of the local roost. We have since caught two Swallows at this roost which showed slight damage to the legs; hair and wool was wrapped tightly around the toes and tibia of one.

MARTIN WELLS

715 Manchester Road, Stocksbridge, Sheffield S30 5DQ

The ability of this bird to perch on a telegraph wire is particularly noteworthy. Eds

Wren swimming On 18th December 1982, at a flooded gravel-pit at Bungay, Suffolk, I saw a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* fly from a bramble *Rubus* and out across the water. It attempted to land on a single reed *Phragmites* projecting no more than 30cm above water level about 20m from the bank. The stem broke, and the Wren fell into the water, submerging completely. It emerged again, spluttering and panic-stricken, and began to swim/flutter around in small circles. It then seemed to recover, and set out determinedly for the nearest bank. It seemed unable to rise from the water and began to 'row' itself along, making quite good speed. Half-way to the shore a Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* moved to intercept it. The Wren saw the Moorhen, and raised its striking rate, accelerating away to the bank, where it disappeared into cover provided by a low branch at water level. Small birds often splash about in puddles or birdbaths, but I have never seen anything like this before. The Wren was certainly swimming, not just fluttering on the surface. At each downward wing stroke, the head bobbed higher out of the water, for all the world like a human racing breast-stroker.

ALICK MOORE

34 Clarendon Gardens, London W9

Letter

Siberian passerine vagrancy in October 1982 I read with great interest the paper by Howey & Bell (1985) concerning the remarkable influx of Pallas's Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus* and other Asiatic migrants in October 1982. Having also studied the peculiar events at that time, I find myself in broad and close agreement with the conclusions of their paper. The general timing of the events and the significance of the Siberian anticyclone in permitting, perhaps even encouraging, large-scale vagrancy are not in question. Indeed, the confirmation of the anticyclonic control, following especially from Baker's (1977) studies, suggests that it requires closer attention. With a more perfect understanding of the apparent correlation between early-forming Siberian anticyclones and migrations westwards out of Asia, it may even be possible to use up-to-date weather data from that area to give advance indication of large-scale movements towards Europe. The points of close agreement are not only general, but, encouragingly, frequent in detail, some of which may be outlined as follows:

- (a) the timing of the departure of the vagrants from their summer grounds at or about 24th September is critical.

- (b) the agreed and well-established role of the low-pressure system over the southern North Sea in creating 'drift' conditions. In fact, the notable scale of drift of European species tended to be overlooked because of the interest stimulated by the numerous more exotic arrivals.

- (c) the need to distinguish 'northerly' located Siberian breeders, such as the Yellow-browed *P. inornatus*, Arctic *P. borealis* and Greenish Warblers *P. trochiloides* from their 'southerly' cousins the Pallas's, Dusky *P. fuscatus* and Radde's Warblers *P. schwarzi* in terms of their vagrancy rates *vis-à-vis* synoptic conditions in Siberia, especially with regard to the location of the critical anticyclones.

Nevertheless, a number of minor differences exist between my own findings (Wheeler, in press) and those of Howey & Bell. But such areas of disagreement say more about the problems of interpreting incomplete data sets than about the respective accuracies of the two items of research. Indeed, it is possible that the resolution of the minor disagreements can be accommodated easily by remembering the inevitable and wide variation in bird and weather behaviour about the 'mean' conditions that must, of necessity, form the basis of these discussions. For brevity and clarity the points of contrast may also be itemised:

- (a) with regard to the windspeeds on the southern flanks of the Siberian anticyclone in late September 1982, my meteorological sources suggest speeds well below the 30 knots cited by Howey & Bell. Whilst locally such speeds were registered in the mountainous areas on the southern limits of the breeding territories, after 24th, and certainly farther westwards, figures of 10 knots are more realistic. The difference may be critical for reconstructing the timings of events.

- (b) the latter point becomes significant in the second area of disagreement: the timing and pathway of vagrant flight over Russia and Eastern Europe. My conclusions suggest a slower median flight over Asia, arriving in Europe as late as 4th October, with subsequent movement over the Ukraine region before moving northwards towards Scandinavia in response to the prevailing disposition of weather systems. The detailed arguments are set out in my own paper and need not be repeated here.

Howey & Bell are correct in their fig. 4 showing a northerly route over east European Russia as early as 28th September, and this certainly

explains the early arrivals of Siberian species in northwest Europe. They have not, however, elaborated a second and, in my view, more thoroughly exploited route of the later more numerous arrivals that I suggest took a parallel northerly route, perhaps as late as 6th, into northern Europe, but farther to the west, over the border between the USSR and her east European neighbours. This route might account for the major arrivals in Finland (on 6th October) and Sweden (on 10th October), as well as Britain (on 11th October), so closely itemised in Howey & Bell's tables 1 and 2. In conclusion, it must be stressed that the importance of the events of October 1982 lie not in the minutiae of the flight-path geography, but in the fundamental questions that the whole issue of such vagrancy prompts concerning the mysterious mechanisms of what has come to be called 'reversed migration'.

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Seventy-five years ago...

'... we note that Mr Masfield regards ten species as new to the Staffordshire ornithology; but the evidence with regard to the Lesser White-fronted Goose and the Sandwich Tern we should regard as necessitating square brackets.' (*Brit. Birds* 4: 112; September 1910)

Announcements

Your last chance to buy 'Big Jake' That unique disc, *Big Jake Calls the Waders*, on which Jake Ward brilliantly reproduces the calls of 28 waders, is now available to *British Birds* readers. The techniques used were featured in the BBC's *The Living World* on 20th April 1980, as noted by Jeffery Boswall (*Brit. Birds* 73: 426-427), describing it as 'the equivalent in sound of the field guide paintings: no confusing backgrounds and direct comparability'.

The very last few discs have been acquired by Natural History Book Service Ltd, which has agreed to allow us to offer this recording to *BB* readers through British BirdShop. *Big Jake Calls the Waders* is available at £5.95 (+ £1.50 p&p) for the single disc (no cassettes are available, and the disc will not be reissued). **Please order at once**, using the form on page xii.

Moths & butterflies, and spiders We are pleased to be able to offer 'BB' readers the opportunity to acquire the currently available volumes of two works with the quality and degree of authority of our own *BWP*: volumes 1, 2, 9 and 10 of the ten-volume *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland*, edited by John Heath and A. Maitland Emmet; and volumes 1 and 3 of the three-volume *The Spiders of Great Britain and Ireland* by Michael J. Roberts. (In each case, the remaining volumes have not yet been published.) Please order using the British BirdShop form on page xi.

Special 'BB' trip to Thailand From 24th January to 11th February 1986, with Phil Round and Dr Tim Sharrock (see Announcement on pages 307-308 in June issue): for details, write NOW to BB Thai Tour, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Request

Migration surveys and ringing at Eilat, Israel Help is required at the birdwatching centre of the Nature Reserve Authority at Eilat in 1985/86 for: (1) autumn 1985 (ringing of passerines and waders during 15th August to 31st December), and (2) spring 1986 (raptor migration survey during 15th February to 25th May 1986, and ringing during 1st February to 15th June 1986). Volunteers should have a ringing permit of type A or B, and have good ringing experience, or have experience in raptor identification in flight. The Nature Reserve Authority will help in lodging and food expenses for those able to stay for periods longer than one month. Anyone interested should apply in writing and enclose a photocopy of their ringing permit, recommendations from a well-known ornithologist, and mention of their past experience. Please apply to H. Shirihai, c/o NRA Birdwatching Centre, POB 774, Eilat, Israel.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Bird films for youth As part of the International Year of Youth, the first International Ornithological Film Festival will take place in the District of Ménégoût, Deux-Sèvres, France, from 28th October to 2nd November 1985. For details, write to PO le Comité d'Organisation, Marie-Christine Brouard, Centre Social Cantonal, Les Forges, 79340 Ménégoût, France.

New editors for 'Irish Birds' and 'IWC News' Clive Hutchinson, after over eight years as editor of *Irish Birds* (ever since its inception), has now handed over to Hugh Brazier, who was formerly editor of the Irish Wildbird Conservancy's newsletter, *IWC News*. The latter publication is now edited by

Ms Bobbie Reeners. More information, and details of how to become a member of the Irish Wildbird Conservancy, can be obtained from IWC, Southview, Church Road, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, Ireland.

More support for swans It is a pleasure to note that the National Association of Local Councils is supporting a petition to Parliament by one of its members, Eton Town Council, calling for legislation to outlaw the production, sale and use of lead weights in angling because of risks to the environment and the danger to wildlife, especially Mute Swans *Cygnus olor*. The more support the better, to outlaw this insidious pollutant.



212. Presentation by Robert Gillmor, President of the Society of Wildlife Artists, to Ian Lewington of 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' award, London, July 1985 (*R. J. Chandler*)



213. 'BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR' 1985: left to right, JTRS (judge), Nicholas Pike (2nd), Robert Gillmor (President of Society of Wildlife Artists, judge), Ian Lewington (winner of 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award'), Keith Shackleton (judge), Martin Hallam (equal 3rd), and Kim Franklin (equal 3rd), London, July 1985 (*R. J. Chandler*)

Double winner Ian Lewington, winner of this year's 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' title and 'The Richard Richardson Award' received his engraved salver, cheque and inscribed book at a Press reception at the Mall Galleries on 3rd July (plates 212 & 213).

Churchill Travelling Fellowships
Awarded annually as a tribute to Sir Winston

Churchill, these Fellowships enable people from all walks of life, irrespective of age and of educational or professional qualifications, to make studies overseas related to their trade, profession or interests. The 12 categories for 1986 include: 'Endangered and threatened British species—animals and plants'. Any *British Birds* readers who would like to obtain details of how to apply should



write at once (since the closing date for applications is 31st October 1985). To obtain an application form, send your name and address on a stamped addressed envelope to: The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, 15 Queen's Gate Terrace, London SW7 5PR.

Grants awarded to ornithologists The British Ecological Society has just announced the grants awarded under its 'Small Ecological Project Grants' scheme. We are delighted to note that four of the 20 awards have gone to ornithologists: for projects on Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* in Wales; Cheer Pheasants *Catreus wallichii* in Uttar Pradesh, India; Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* in Lancashire; and Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* in south Lancashire. The

214. Twitchers beware! (Roger Thompson)

grants, mostly around £400-£500 this year, are awarded to amateur and professional scientists undertaking surveys of habitats which are threatened or are of special ecological interest, or which have a history of ecological work. Further information can be obtained from Dr A. J. Gray, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Furzebrook Research Station, near Wareham, Dorset BH20 5AS.

Twitchers beware! Roger Thompson, who sent us this photo (plate 214), commented that, although he had been to many such places, he had never before been to one so prominently marked.

Recent reports



Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

The dates in this report refer to June unless otherwise stated.

An anticyclone gave warm easterly weather for the first few days of the month.



From 6th, however, cool northerlies arrived as high pressure over the Atlantic dominated the weather pattern. Cloudy, wet, unsettled weather kept temperatures down, and even a change to westerlies after 16th until the end of the month did not bring a rise in temperature, with the air still originating from the north. A consequence of the cool conditions was a reduction in insect activity and hence availability as food for nestlings.

Smaller birds

Judged by recent standards, this June was on the whole disappointing, though there were a few real surprises, including three or four potential firsts for Britain and Ireland, starting with a female **Oriental Cuckoo** *Cuculus saturatus*, trapped at Spurn (Humberside) on 2nd and staying to puzzle all who went to see her until at least 25th; astonishingly a second female was caught at the same locality on 29th. The island of Tiree (Strathclyde) held an immature male **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius*, currently in category D, for four days when it was sadly picked up dead. Perhaps less likely to be of wild origin was a **Cedar Waxwing** *Bombycilla cedrorum* on the Isle of Noss (Shetland) for two days around 27th. To complete the quartet, a

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* flew past one lucky observer at Portland (Dorset) on 29th.

A **Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* reeling in Co. Cork from 17th into July was only the second record for Ireland, where there were also above-average numbers of **Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. Their large cousin, the **Great Reed Warbler** *A. arundinaceus*, turned up on The Skerries (Shetland) on 28th May, and at Lewes (East Sussex) on 8th, and there was a good scattering of extralimital **Marsh Warblers** *A. palustris* including, rather surprisingly, Norfolk's third and fourth records, and Derbyshire's first, near Etwall. A **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* remained at Spurn from 30th May to 2nd, while a singing male appeared briefly on Lundy (Devon) on 3rd. The Swansea (West Glamorgan) **Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* stayed into June, and a **Chiffchaff** *P. collybita* of the Scandinavian race *abietinus* at Balnakeil near Durness (Highland) on 4th was many kilometres from the nearest tree. **Wood Warblers** *P. sibilatrix* were rare in Ireland only a few years ago: now they sing from perhaps 20 woods in the North alone. Two **Lesser Whitethroats** *S. curruca* held territory in Northern Ireland this spring, and a pair of **Pied Flycatchers** *Ficedula hypoleuca* nested in Co. Antrim, the first breeding record for Ireland. Two **Serins** *Serinus serinus* in Co. Fermanagh on 31st May were also of interest, while one reappeared at Wells (Norfolk) at the month end. Another exceptional breeding record was that of a pair of 'Mealy' **Redpolls** *Carduelis flammea flammea* on Orkney, and a **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* at Billinge (Greater Manchester) on 5th and 7th was a local rarity. **Crossbills** *Loxia curvirostra*, presumably of Scandinavian origin, started appearing early



to mid month, with up to 30 at Kergord (Shetland) and in Orkney, 90 at Scaling Dam (North Yorkshire), 40 at Sandy and 60 at Woburn (Bedfordshire), with smaller numbers elsewhere on the British East coast and east Midlands.

Red-throated Pipits *Anthus cervinus* appeared on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 7th and 8th, at Filey (North Yorkshire) on 12th and 13th, and a **Tawny Pipit** *A. campestris* was on Kessingland Levels (Suffolk) early in the month. Also in Suffolk, a **Roller** *Coracias garrulus* staged only a brief appearance at Walberswick on 28th May, the day after a very late **Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor* at Eel Tarn, Eskdale (Cumbria). The only **Woodchat Shrike** *L. senator* reported was one at Letcombe Regis (Oxfordshire) on 16th. **Golden Orioles** *Oriolus oriolus* were on Lundy, a female, from 4th to 6th, a male at Spurn on 4th, and one on Fair Isle on 11th, at which site there had been an adult **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* on 31st May, with a second at Gossabrough (Shetland) on 2nd. A 'Hooded' **Carriion Crow** *Corvus corone cornix* was an unseasonal visitor to Ruddington (Nottinghamshire) on 8th.

Little Swifts *Apus affinis* are now almost annual, one at St Andrews (Fife) on 29th May being only a couple of days after the **Needle-tailed Swift** *Hirundapus caudacutus* already noted last month, and one day after a **Pallid Swift** *A. pallidus* at Berwick-upon-Tweed (Northumberland) on 28th. The only reported **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* was one at Taxal (Derbyshire) on 5th, Unst (Shetland) was visited by a **Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* on 6th, and a lost **Scops Owl** *Otus scops* haunted Papa Westray (Orkney) from 24th to the month end.

The first returning migrants through Walney (Cumbria) were single **Willow Warbler** *P. trochilus*, **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* and **Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* on the last day of the month. Where did the summer go to?

Waders

The first returning migrants in evidence were, however, as always, waders, with more than 100 **Lapwings** *Vanellus vanellus* an hour west over Hilton (Cambridgeshire) on 15th, and by the month end good numbers of **Spotted Redshanks** *Tringa erythropus* and **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* in eastern England. Less-common but expected birds were single **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* at Blacktoft (Humberside) and **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* at

Minsmere (Suffolk) into July. Early in the month, there had been a **Red-necked Phalarope** at Snettisham (Norfolk), two **Curlew Sandpipers** *C. ferruginea* at Cley (Norfolk), a **pratincole** *Glareola* at Elmley (Kent), a male **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* at Hanningfield Reservoir (Essex) from 4th to 7th (the second there this spring), a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* at Coton Gravel-pits (Warwickshire) from 1st to 4th, and another Broad-billed together with a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* on West Mainland (Orkney) from 8th to 10th. There were belated reports of two rare shanks in May: a **Marsh Sandpiper** *T. stagnatilis* at Snettisham, and a **Greater Yellow-legs** *T. melanoleuca* on Skye (Highland).



The larger wading birds were represented mainly by **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta*. Further to the May records already reported, we heard of three together at Staines Reservoir (Surrey) on 27th May, and others at Coton Gravel-pits, Havergate (Suffolk) and Blacktoft, all in that month. June reports came from Truro (Cornwall) from 6th to at least 9th, Minsmere on and off from 19th, Titchfield Haven (Hampshire), Elmley, Lough Eyes near Enniskillen (Co. Fermanagh) on 24th and St Mary's (Scilly) from 30th. **Great White Egrets** *E. alba* graced Unst on 6th, and presumably the same bird on Mainland Shetland later in the month, and Thorney Island (Hampshire) on 15th. The only **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* was on Shotton Pools (Clwyd) for a couple of weeks, and a second summer **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* spent a few days around 7th at Lopwell Dam near Plymouth (Devon). A poor showing of **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* was evidenced by singletons at Minsmere until about 9th, Cley from 9th to 11th and Titchwell (Norfolk) later in the month. In a good spring for **Black Storks**



Ciconia nigra, another was seen soaring over Plastow Green (Hampshire) on 9th.

Wildfowl and seabirds

Greylag Geese *Anser anser* bred for the first time in both Orkney and Shetland, though their origin is perhaps no more certain than the ten **Pink-footed Geese** *A. brachyrhynchus* seen at Bradwell (Essex) on 30th. **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* continue to frequent Norby Loch (Shetland) and Chew Valley Lake (Avon), while a drake **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* turned up at Kingsbury Water Park (Warwickshire) on 15th, moving to Ladywalk on 16th. Equally unusual was the pair of **Garganeys** *A. querquedula* on The Skerries on 2nd. The last day of the month saw a **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* at Walberswick (Suffolk).

An immature **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* spent the month at Burravoe, North Roe (Shetland), and three summer-plumaged **Great Northern Divers** *G. immer* in Scrabster Harbour (Highland) on 5th were a fine sight, as was the resplendent **Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena*, for once living up to its name, on Rutland Water (Leicestershire).

The Dungeness (Kent) and Balranald (Western Isles) skua passages were disappointing this spring, with 76 and 67 **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus*, and two and 37 **Long-tailed Skuas** *S. longicaudus* respectively in May. A single Long-tailed Skua frequented the colony of Arctic Skuas *S. parasiticus* on Fair Isle on 9th, and another passed Walney on 13th. After the first good movement of **Manx Shearwaters** *Puffinus puffinus* at Walney on 9th with 100, single **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* passed by on 12th, 13th and 25th. Late in the month, a few Cory's were also seen off Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), where there was

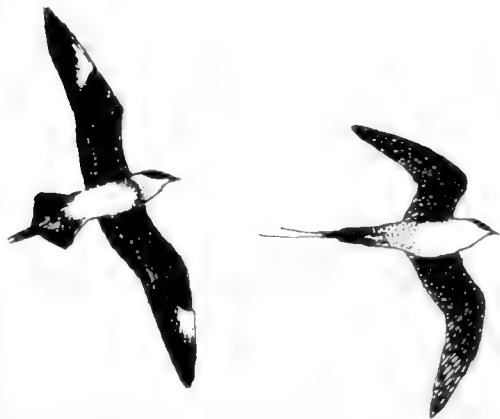
also a **Little Shearwater** *P. assimilis*. A **Black Guillemot** *Cephus grylle* off Hope's Nose, Torbay (Devon) on 1st was unusual, and even more so the summer-plumaged **Little Auk** *Alle alle* at Portmarnic (Co. Dublin) on 3rd.

The only gulls of interest were an adult **Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucoideus* in Wick Harbour on 5th, and a first-summer **Mediterranean Gull** *L. melanocephalus* on Gloucester Tip (Gloucestershire) on 30th. Alert viewers of the BBC TV Birdwatch from the Farne Islands (Northumberland) were astonished to see what seemed to be a **Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* sitting amongst the Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* on Brownsman Island. A **Caspian Tern** *S. caspia* visited Minsmere on 8th. Despite low numbers of **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger*, with 14 at Hanningfield on 2nd/3rd a large count, there were above-average numbers of **White-winged Black Terns** *C. leucopterus*, with two in Ireland at the end of May, two together at Peterborough (Cambridgeshire) on 7th, and four or five others, one as far north as Orkney, at Loch of Harray from 23rd to 25th.

Birds of prey

There were further May reports of **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans*, at Symond's Yat (Gloucestershire) on 15th and Lightshaw Hall Flash, Wigan (Greater Manchester) on 25th, with the same or another at Mellor on 5th June when it was watched drifting over the border into Derbyshire. A **Red Kite** *M. milvus* flew over Burton Dassett (Warwickshire) on 9th. Summering **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* loafed around the Essex reservoirs of Abberton, Ardleigh and Hanningfield, and in the Dukeries (Nottinghamshire). Unseasonal raptors were a **Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus* at Hanningfield on 30th, and a **Merlin** *F. columbarius* at Beachy Head (East Sussex) on 28th. A typically confiding female





Red-footed Falcon *F. vespertinus* gave excellent views on Bodmin Moor on 2nd, but, although not a first for Britain and Ireland, bird of the month for most birders, had they seen it, would surely have been the dark-phase **Eleonora's Falcon** *F. eleonora* on South Uist (Western Isles) on 14th.

Recent rarities decisions

The record of **Chimney Swifts** *Chaetura pelagica* at Porthgwarra (Cornwall) in October 1982 has been accepted into Category A of the British and Irish list.

Latest news

The first ten days of August brought the usual scattering of Nearctic waders: **White rumped** *Calidris fuscicollis*, **Baird's** *C. bairdii*, **Pectoral** *C. melanotos* and **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis*; adult **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* on South Uist and **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* in Co. Louth. **Great Puffins** *gravis* and **Cory's Shearwaters** regularly off Porthgwarra. Long-stayers included **Greater Yellowlegs** at Minsmere and **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* at Cley.

Short reviews

Birds of Kerala: the birds of Travancore and Cochin. By **Sálim Ali**. (Oxford University Press, India; first published 1953, second edition 1969, reprinted 1984. £15.00) This welcome reprint will be indispensable to anyone visiting southern India (and not just Kerala). After a stimulating introduction, all relevant species and subspecies are comprehensively treated in Handbook style. Only a selection is illustrated in colour, but this includes most of the endemics and many distinct races. [NIGEL REDMAN] **Birds of the Cayman Islands.** By **Patricia Bradley**. (P. E. Bradley, 1985. £22.00) Competently written, well-produced guide to the birds of these islands. The 72 excellent colour photographs illustrate most of the common species (though not all of those also found in North America). The 148 regularly occurring species are covered in some detail (163 pages), whilst 28 rarer visitors are dealt with in a nine-page appendix. Birdwatchers visiting the islands should obtain a copy, though the high price may put others off. [DAVID FISHER] **Manual del Anillador (ringers' guide in Spanish).** By **Pedro Ceballos, Juan Molina, Antonio Franco and Borja Palacios**. (Instituto Nacional Para La Conservacion de la Naturaleza, 1984, No price given). Based closely on the BTO *Ringer's Manual*, this is more weather-

proof, pocketable and better illustrated, but less comprehensive and with no index. Essential for foreigners ringing in Spain (although with no instructions specifically for them), as required ring-sizes and methods differ a good deal from ours, and there are recommendations for Iberia's special birds, ringing in mixed heronries, and other local tips. It is possible for the non Spanish-speaker to follow some of the critical sections. [J. M. O'SULLIVAN] **Der Weiss-Storch.** By **Gerhard Creutz**. (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 375. A. Ziemsen Verlag, 1985. DM25.20) Number 375 in this series of paperback monographs with all-German texts. The references alone take up 8½ of the 216 pages; invaluable source of information concerning the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*. **The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland.** Edited by **John Heath and A. Maitland Emmet**. Vol. 1 Micropterigidae-Heliozelidae. Vol. 2 Cossidae-Heliodinidae. Vol. 9 Sphingidae-Noctuidae (Part I). Vol. 10 Noctuidae (Part II) and Agaristidae. (Harley Books. Vol. 1: 1976, £37.50; vol. 2: 1985, £47.50; vol. 9: 1979, £40.00; vol. 10: 1983, £45.00). One of the complaints about some binoculars which do not focus close-to is based on their bird-watcher owner's wish to obtain close views of butterflies and moths. There

have been some good and well-illustrated books on butterflies, and others on moths, in the past, but this (eventually) ten-volume set is the lepidopterists' equivalent of the ornithologists' *BWP* (except that it covers Britain and Ireland rather than the Western Palearctic), combined with *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*. The standard of text and illustrations (execution and reproduction) and the inclusion of standard dot-distribution maps make this set not only very valuable for the entomologist or general field naturalist, but also a collector's item for lovers of good books. The editors, John Heath and A. Maitland Emmet, and their team of associate editors, artists and authors, are achieving an end-product which many ornithologists will—if they can afford it—want to own. It is worth purchasing each volume as it is published, since, for instance, volume 1, which cost just £17.50 when it first appeared in 1976, is now £30.00, and further increases seem inevitable. Highly recommended (and a good investment!). **Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa.** By Gordon Lindsay Maclean. (John. Voelcker Bird Book Fund, 1985. R24.50 + p&p) Even if you already own the book of this title, first published in 1940 and with second, third and fourth editions in 1957, 1970 and 1978, you will probably wish to obtain this fifth edition. Not only have there been many amendments and additions made (the text has been 'completely revised' by Dr Maclean), but also the distribution maps now show resident breeding (green), passage (yellow) and migrant breeding (blue) separately. The most important change, however, is in the illustrations. There are many completely new plates by Geoff Lockwood and Kenneth Newman, and the standard of illustration is now comparable with that which we have come to expect of field guides and handbooks. The plates are also now all arranged in one block, which is much more convenient for reference compared with the previously awkward-to-use scattered plates. With over 200 more pages than the last edition, this book will be wanted by everyone with an interest in the birds of Africa south of the Kunene, Okavango and Zambezi Rivers (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe). **The Spiders of Great Britain and Ireland.** By Michael J. Roberts. Vol. 1 Atypidae-Theridiosomatidae. Vol. 3 Colour plates. (Harley Books, 1985. Vol. 1, £45.00; vol. 3, £55.00; vols. 1 &

3 together £90.00). When complete, this three-volume set will form the definitive guide to the identification of all British and Irish species. The paintings, as well as the text, have been prepared by Dr Michael J. Roberts, who has managed to combine this with his medical practice. Volume 1 provides an introduction and species-texts for the larger spiders; the still-in-preparation volume 2 will contain texts for the smaller species; volume 3 contains 237 full-page colour plates, illustrating the 307 species. The illustrations are all much enlarged, but each one includes a small, life-size line-drawing to give scale. Every British naturalist who ever wants to identify a spider will refer to this work, and these volumes must become an essential part of the library of every serious field naturalist, whether professional or amateur. The one thing lacking is distribution maps, but the author points out that 'Because there are still relatively few people working on spiders, it can be argued that our present knowledge of spider distribution partly reflects the distribution of active arachnologists. It is hoped that the present work will stimulate further interest in spiders and an increasing number of records from individual collectors. The known distribution patterns might then be altered somewhat and could form the subject of a separate publication.' Personally, I hope that this information will eventually form a slim volume 4 in this magnificent set. **Travel Diaries of a Naturalist. II.** By Peter Scott. Edited by Miranda Weston-Smith. (Collins, 1985. £12.95) If you enjoyed the mix in volume 1 (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 77: 132), you will find this a most satisfying second helping. One travels around the world—this time to Hawaii, California, Alaska, Florida, the Bahamas, Iceland, Norway, Spitsbergen, Greenland, Israel, Romania and Siberia—with Sir Peter Scott, sharing his thrills, his tribulations and his thoughts, all wonderfully illustrated by those best-of-all paintings, those from an artist's field sketchbook. Birds, fishes and plants are all delightfully lifelike, and almost every double-page spread without some paintings or drawings has colour photographs of the places visited. A book to enjoy. **A Century of Bird Books.** By Peter Tate. (H. F. & G. Witherby, 1985. £10.50) This second edition (the first was reviewed in *Brit. Birds* 73: 274) contains an extra 16 pages of new and previously omitted titles.

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Reviews

A Dictionary of Birds. Edited by Bruce Campbell and Elizabeth Lack. T. & A. D. Poyser, Calton, 1985. 670 pages; over 500 black-and-white plates, line-drawings and diagrams. £39.00.

The majority of books that one is asked to review one sits down and reads, with more or less enjoyment, from cover to cover. With this book, though, such an approach is an obvious impossibility, so I have to say, at the outset, that I have not read all the million plus words that it contains and it is entirely possible that, apart from the editors, their helpers, and the publisher, no-one has, and no-one will. So how does one review such a work? In my case, by having it by my desk for some weeks, consulting it as often as I could, getting side-tracked frequently into reading far more than I intended, and by a certain amount of random dipping, as well as checking on topics in which I feel I have a certain expertise.

Comparisons with its predecessor, Sir Landsborough Thomson's prestigious *New Dictionary of Birds* (1964), are inevitable, though I do recognise that many of those reading this review will not own that work; but, equally, those that do will be wondering whether they should also own this one. My answer to the latter has to be an unqualified yes. Thank Sir Landsborough for his long and faithful service as an indispensable reference work, push his tome firmly to one side on your shelves, and purchase this magnificent *Dictionary* instead. It has the same qualities of all-embracing authoritativeness, an outstanding list of contributors, and that sense of feeling that if it is not to be found within these pages then it somehow cannot be worth knowing. Add to this the incorporation of so much new material that it was thought necessary to produce another 'Dictionary' after only 21 years, compared with the gap of 68 years between the *New Dictionary* and its predecessor, Alfred Newton's *Dictionary of Birds*, and, apart from wondering what the gap will be next time around, here is the book that everyone must have.

If you do already own the *New Dictionary*, then you will find many articles which are repeated here with only minor up-dating amendments, not quite enough in one article on a subject I am familiar with, but just as many which have been completely rewritten. For example, dipping brought me to Endocrinology, a subject which qualified for some 1,250 words in the *New Dictionary*. In this *Dictionary*, the same topic has been completely rewritten from scratch and is given over 4,500 words, together with three detailed diagrams. Almost the next subject is Ectoparasite. Here, by contrast, the original article from the *New Dictionary* (2,500 words) has survived more-or-less intact, though broadened in scope to include a slightly more detailed coverage of the Protozoa, to a total of just over 3,000 words.

The above is as good an example as any of the developments that have occurred in ornithology in the last two decades and which are so accurately reflected here. There are many others. The article on Breeding Season has been expanded from perhaps 1,800 words to about 5,000, plus two diagrams. This reviews some of the many studies being carried out, particularly long-term, aimed at a better understanding of the ultimate and proximate factors affecting breeding seasons. Radio-tracking appears as a new subject, complete with circuit diagrams for two transmitters. Respiratory System is not only rewritten to double the previous length, but is now illustrated with some superb three-dimensional drawings. Such examples are legion.

The presence of so many excellent diagrams and photographs is a feature of this work. The *New Dictionary* was illustrated with 16 colour plates and twice as many black-and-white, while line-drawings were sprinkled through the text. Here, colour has been eschewed, but extremely well-executed and apposite line-drawings and good-quality black-and-white photographs are to be found on a majority of page openings, illustrating points in the text with great clarity. Indeed, the whole lay-out and design of the book are as attractive as one has come to expect from this publisher. (British ornithology is indeed fortunate to have the firm of Poyser in its midst.) A much increased page size has, among other things, cut down the thickness of the book compared with the very fat *New Dictionary*, so that one has no fears for the binding, a source of considerable weakness in the earlier volume, though I would surmise that the use of only 8 pt (the same type size as this) may prove a good test of the need for spectacles.

Moving away from the technical, whether book production or subjects, I thoroughly enjoyed the articles on birds in art, poetry, and music. All are very greatly expanded, and that on poetry has many delightful quotations, though I was sad that no room could be found for an

Edward Lear limerick. If I may be allowed another niggles: while due mention is made of Messiaen's frequent incorporation of bird song into his compositions, ornithologically it surely would have been relevant to mention his unique system of notating bird song on paper, which he does in the field, for later incorporation in his music.

A further article deals with bird illustration, and, while there is reference to the development of illustration for the purposes of identification, including the influence of Roger Tory Peterson, and more recently Lars Jonsson, I was disappointed not to find any treatment of identification as a subject in its own right.

I have only sampled here and there since I received this fine *Dictionary*. Undoubtedly, there are many advances recorded which I have yet to find, but which I will be glad to do so when the need arises. I can finish only by whole-heartedly recommending it, congratulating the editors on a magnificent job, and praising the publisher yet again. M. A. OGILVIE

Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. The Birds of the Western Palearctic. Vol. IV: Terns to Woodpeckers. By S. Cramp et al. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1985. 960 pages; 98 colour plates; numerous line-drawings. £60.00.

This, the fourth volume of the highly acclaimed '*BWP*', completes the non-passerines. The 14-man editorial team and its Chief Editor, Stanley Cramp, are to be warmly congratulated on this volume and on the work as a whole. In real, inflation-adjusted terms, each volume seems to be more expensive than the last; but anyone seriously interested in birds and failing to acquire *BWP* will live deeply to regret it. The work is dedicated to the memory of H. F. Witherby, editor of the great *The Handbook of British Birds* (1938-41). Formerly it was *de rigueur* for any contributor to *British Birds* to refer to *The Handbook*; now it is equally essential that he or she refers to *BWP*. So, take advantage of the various reduced prices on offer, and buy now!

This reviewer finds it astonishing that a work of such scholarship, detail and complexity, demanding exacting liaison at all stages of researching and writing between editors, artists, and an army of contributors and informants, has been produced with such perfection. Inevitably there are a few errors (e.g. the absence of 'Flicker' in bold print from page 813), and I shall have to embark on a little dutiful nitpicking. But first let it be clearly stated that the work is easily the most authoritative, and simply the best English text available. It is performing an incalculable service to European and world ornithology. Like previous ones, volume IV is a fascinating compendium and, at the same time, a very handsome book: a delight to use and to own.

This volume deals with terns (20 species), skimmers (1), auks (9), sandgrouse (7), pigeons (14), parrots (1), cuckoos (8), owls (17), nightjars (6), swifts (10), kingfishers (5), bee-eaters (3), rollers (4), hoopoes (1) and woodpeckers (12)—118 species in all. Species accounts average 7.7 pages each, perhaps rather longer than those in earlier volumes. The longest accounts are of Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*, Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, Barn Tyto *alba*, Tawny Strix *aluco* and Long-eared Owls *Asio otus*, Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*, with 16-21 pages each. Readers may be surprised by the high totals of western Palearctic species in some of these families. The reason is partly that the inevitably slightly arbitrary delimitation of the southern boundary of the region through the central Sahara has included many essentially Afrotropical birds. Some extend marginally into the Palearctic as breeders (African Collared Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea*, Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*, Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*, Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus*, Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*) or former breeders (Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*, Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*); others are accidental vagrants (Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*, Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius*, Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus*, Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*). A number of additional birds are vagrants from the eastern Palearctic and elsewhere, and the species total is further increased by four pigeons and swifts endemic to the Canary and Cape Verde Islands and by two extinct birds, the Passenger Pigeon *Ectopistes migratorius* and the Great Auk *Pinguinus impennis*. It is a pity that the Great Auk merits neither illustration (except for its egg, which unaccountably has an entire colour plate to itself), nor a text more substantial than 200 words. Sven-Axel Bengtson's unusual paper on its breeding ecology, published in January 1984 (*Auk* 101: 1-12), receives no mention, but that is doubtless because the effective cut-off time for literature surveillance seems to have been about late 1983.

Mostly, these 'peripheral' birds have been dealt with fully and laudably; but treatment of some Afrotropical species in particular suggests that their authors have not always obtained the best available information. Prozesky's (1968) *A Field Guide to the Birds of Southern Africa* is referred to several times, which is surprising in view of the fact that some earlier and many later texts provide longer and more authoritative data on African birds. For Broad-billed Roller habitat, reference to data in Thiollay (1971, *Oiseau* 41: 148-162) would have been more valuable than the citations made to Bannerman (1933) and Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1952). Some germane papers of Thiollay's are not referred to at all, and it would have been preferable for J. M. Thiollay to have been consulted personally, about this and some other species. Likewise G. J. Morel and M. Y. Morel should have been consulted about African Collared Doves: they have extensive food and weight data which are not utilised.

Style and format are the same as in previous volumes. The reader has to turn to volume I for the required detailed explanations of Distribution and maps, Population, Movements, Social pattern and behaviour, Voice, sonagrams, and other sections under which every regional-breeding species is discussed. Some modifications and amplifications were provided in short Introductions to volumes II and III. In the present volume, the only further introductory notice is a brief warning about the mapping and population-data accuracy of desert-dwelling sandgrouse, owls and nightjars, and a note about map-colour conventions for terns and auks. In spite of the disclaimer, the maps are remarkably detailed and make fascinating study. As remarked by reviewers of earlier volumes, distribution sections are merely to *supplement* information presented visually in the maps, and they are restricted to documenting *changes* in status. But, in the absence of any guidance more recently than volume I, that fact is not at all obvious, and many distribution texts appear curiously disjointed and almost irrelevant. It will be a very considerable service to users of *BWP* if all introductory explanations can be integrated and reprinted, say, in the first of the three forthcoming passerine volumes.

Higher groups or taxa of birds are defined, but not genera. That is a pity, for I feel that *BWP*, dealing with such a substantial part of the world's avifauna, should have taken as authoritative a lead in that respect as in others. Few generic allocations in this volume are controversial; but one would like to know why, amongst the terns, for instance, *Gelochelidon* is recognised, but not *Thalasseus*. The huge compilation of behavioural data here could and should be used to validate (or otherwise) generic boundaries based in the past largely on morphological criteria. When one reads (page 733) that the Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon* is 'perhaps better placed in a separate genus *Megaceryle*, leaving *Ceryle* with a single species, *C. rudis*' one is entitled to know why *Megaceryle* was *not* used for the Belted Kingfisher, as it properly should have been.

Further, on the topic of names, I would have preferred Pied Cuckoo to Jacobin Cuckoo for *Clamator jacobinus*, since the former name has greater currency in both Africa and India. More importantly, the absence of qualifiers from English names of several common Palearctic birds is unfortunate, potentially ambiguous, and contrary to the world bird-name trend. Birds called simply 'Guillemot', 'Cuckoo', 'Nightjar', 'Swift', 'Kingfisher', 'Bee-eater' and 'Roller' all require qualifiers in order to avoid confusion in an avifauna with, respectively, three, seven, five, ten, five, three and four species sharing the appellation.

All birds and eggs are portrayed in colour, and throughout the text there is a generous number of excellent line-drawings of behaviour. Eggs are shown in 12 plates of beautiful and informative photographs (the three eggs of Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* being slightly out of focus); the 28 eggs of Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* matched with 28 eggs of many passerine hosts (plate 96) comprise a particularly valuable illustration. Bird plates are by Norman Arlott (16 plates), N.W. Cusa (14), Håkan Delin (13), D. I. M. Wallace (13), C. J. F. Coombs (12), C. E. Talbot Kelly (ten) and Robert Gillmor (eight). In my view, Delin's owls are quite the finest portraits in all volumes of *BWP* to date. The artistry is simply magnificent—a pity that the owls could not have been enlarged and represented in more plates. Arlott's kingfishers and woodpeckers and Gillmor's auks are exquisite too. Wallace's cuckoos and swifts and Talbot Kelly's nightjars—all difficult birds to portray—are very fine, although the cuckoos-in-flight plate (42) may not please everyone. Talbot Kelly's rollers and hoopoes are delightful; but the Broad-billed Rollers in plate 74 are too long-billed and insufficiently large-headed (these features are shown correctly in plate 73, where, however, adults of the same species look too heavy-footed and their legs appear black, rather than olive as correctly described in the text). But her bee-eaters are less successful, and barely do justice to the remark on page 748: 'plumage multicoloured, more vivid and contrasting than any other bird in west Palearctic'. Birds 1 and 2 in plate 69 are too yellow, bird 3 has too stout a bill, and the blue parts of bird 6

are too vivid and too extensive; birds 1 and 2 in plate 70 are too fluffy, and have their secondaries impossibly fanned out across the primaries; and, in plate 71, birds 1 and 3 are much too round-winged. I have to be even more unkind with the remaining artists: the pigeons are mostly lumpy and muddy; and, while the tern plates are helpful guides to identification and are artistically pleasing, they are spoilt by flagrant retouching (e.g. plates 11 and 13).

Lastly, a plea. Relating a given bird in a plate with its facing caption is unnecessarily and distractingly difficult. The same criticism was made of volume I of *The Birds of Africa*, whose editors have responded by designing an improved system for forthcoming volumes. *Please* will the editors of *BWP* do likewise?

It's easy to criticise; but let my carping not detract from the general conclusion: a superlative book.

C. H. FRY

Nests and Eggs of Birds found Breeding in Australia and Tasmania. vol. 1. By Alfred J. North. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985. 382 pages; 48 black-and-white plates; 39 line-drawings. £79.00.

It is difficult to avoid calling this facsimile reproduction a period piece; many photographs of nests and eggs show them removed from their sites and the original drawings by Neville Cayley, father of *What Bird is That?* Cayley, are delightfully stilted. Cayley also coloured the egg plates, here reproduced by 'the heliotype process' in uniform sepia. This volume covers some 170 passerine species in 69 genera, and contains many first descriptions of nests found by the pioneer Australian ornithologists at the turn of the century. The only modern addition is the Foreword by Walter Boles of the Australian Museum. He reveals North's intense personal feud with my namesake, A. J. Campbell, resulting in some unfortunate omissions from this classic work, first published in 1904.

BRUCE CAMPBELL

Birds in Your Garden. By Nigel Wood. Hamlyn, Twickenham, 1985. 160 pages; over 100 colour plates; 80 line-drawings. £7.95.

The subtitle to this book is 'How to attract and identify over 70 common species'. This is a splendid aim. My own garden list, after eight years, is 67 species (35 of which have nested in the garden). Thus, I have taken an interest in 'gardening for birds' for some time, and put much of what I have learnt into practice, but Nigel Wood's book nevertheless provided me with very interesting reading, and a remarkable number of excellent suggestions (things to do, or ways of doing things) which were new to me. So, on the 'how to attract' part of the subtitle, I strongly recommend this book to all garden-owners. The nest-box designs, suggestions for planting, general management, and so on, are all really useful. A total of 54 pages is devoted to species-by-species accounts, under the headings of 'Status', 'Habitat', 'Identification', 'Behaviour', 'Voice', 'Nesting', and 'General notes'. While some of the information here is quite useful to the bird-gardener, it does seem a mistake to have brought identification into the book at all (and especially into the book's subtitle), since it is dealt with only very perfunctorily, and I would in many cases be hard put to identify the species of bird from the description provided if the account did not have a heading (perhaps the publisher insisted that the author should include this aspect). Similarly, the colour photographs and other coloured illustrations are not really necessary, since most are merely portraits of birds which one might expect in a garden. Perhaps, however, these illustrations will attract purchasers; if so, inclusion of the photographs will have been justified, for the book as a whole will be really useful for the non-birdwatcher who merely wants to bring some wildlife into the garden as much as for the ornithologist. Whereas the latter may find the colour photographs superfluous, both classes of purchaser will find the line-drawings in the margin and text very useful. These are not just for decoration, but show clearly how to make, do, prepare, and so on, the various gadgets or garden features described in the text. The very reasonable price should ensure that this book is widely purchased. It will prove to be very useful to its purchasers, and to the wildlife under their control. I recommend this book, even if you think you already know all there is to know about bird-gardening.

J. T. R. SHARROCK



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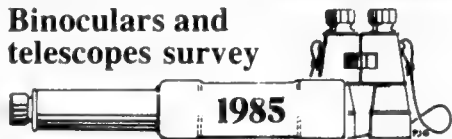
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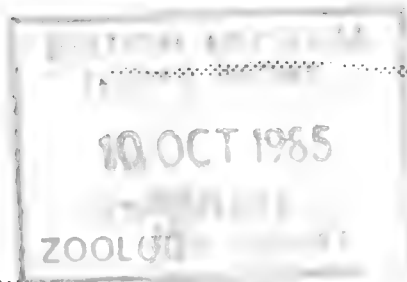
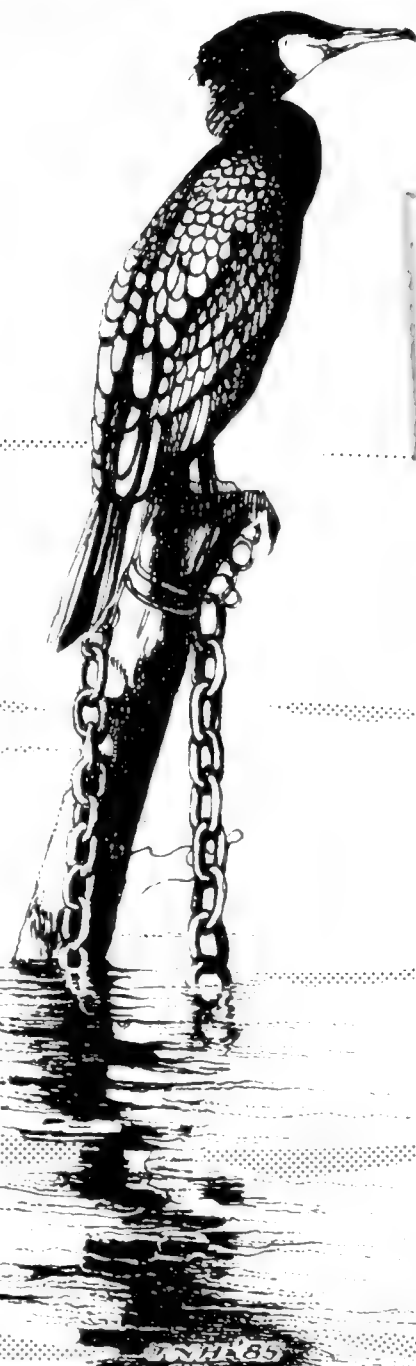
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Front cover: Olivaceous Warbler on St Mary's in October 1984 (*John M. Walters*); the original drawing of this month's cover design is for sale in a postal auction (see page 56 in January issue for procedure)

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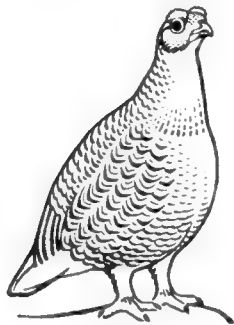
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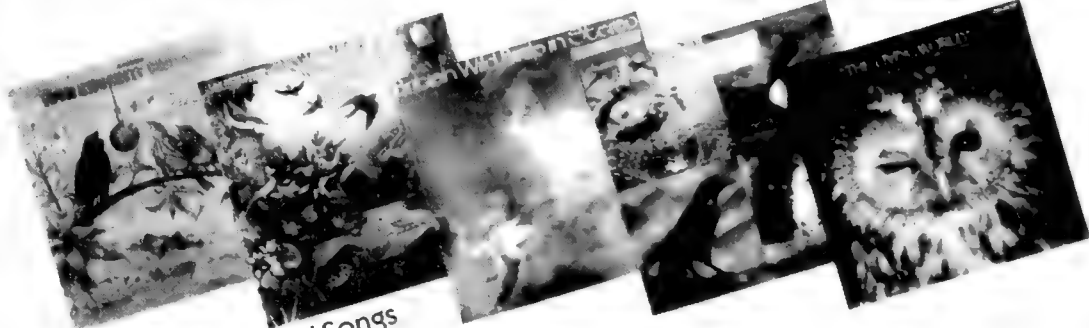
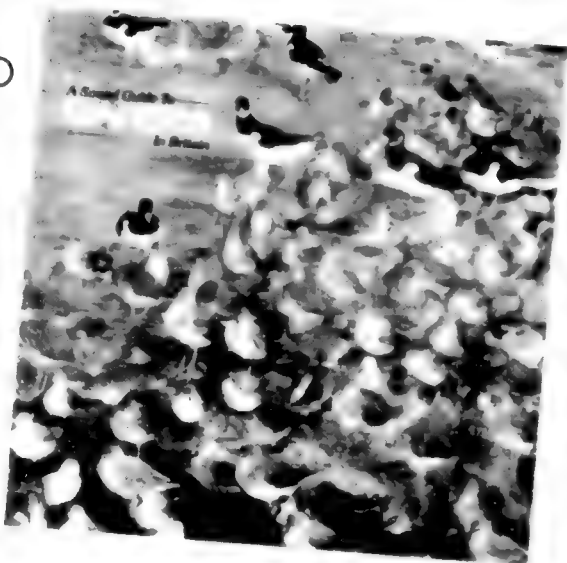
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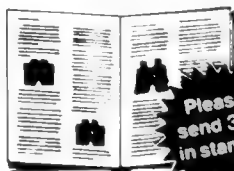


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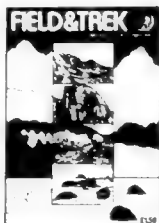
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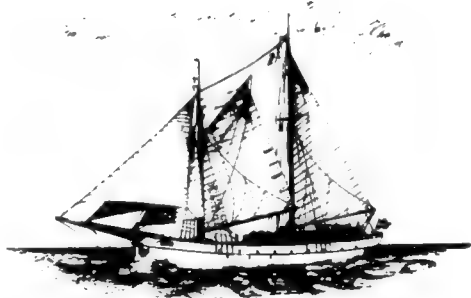
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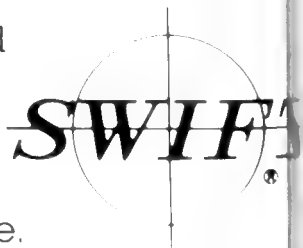
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Rarities Committee news and announcements

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P. J. Grant and the Rarities Committee

Committee membership is listed on the inside front cover each month, and on the back of the title page. In the absence of further nominations (*Brit. Birds* 77: 292), Iain Robertson started his official term of membership

on 1st April this year, having earlier filled (in an ex-officio capacity) the vacancy left by Richard Porter, who resigned in October 1984 due to pressure of other work. We are most grateful to Richard for his major contributions during more than three years of membership of the Committee.

The following points of interest arise mainly from the Committee's annual meeting at Blunham, Bedfordshire, on 30th March 1985.

Offshore rarity records

The Committee will consider rarity records which come from within the offshore boundary shown in fig. 1. The boundary follows the UK Fishery Limits, which extend to 200 miles (320 km), or to the median line between

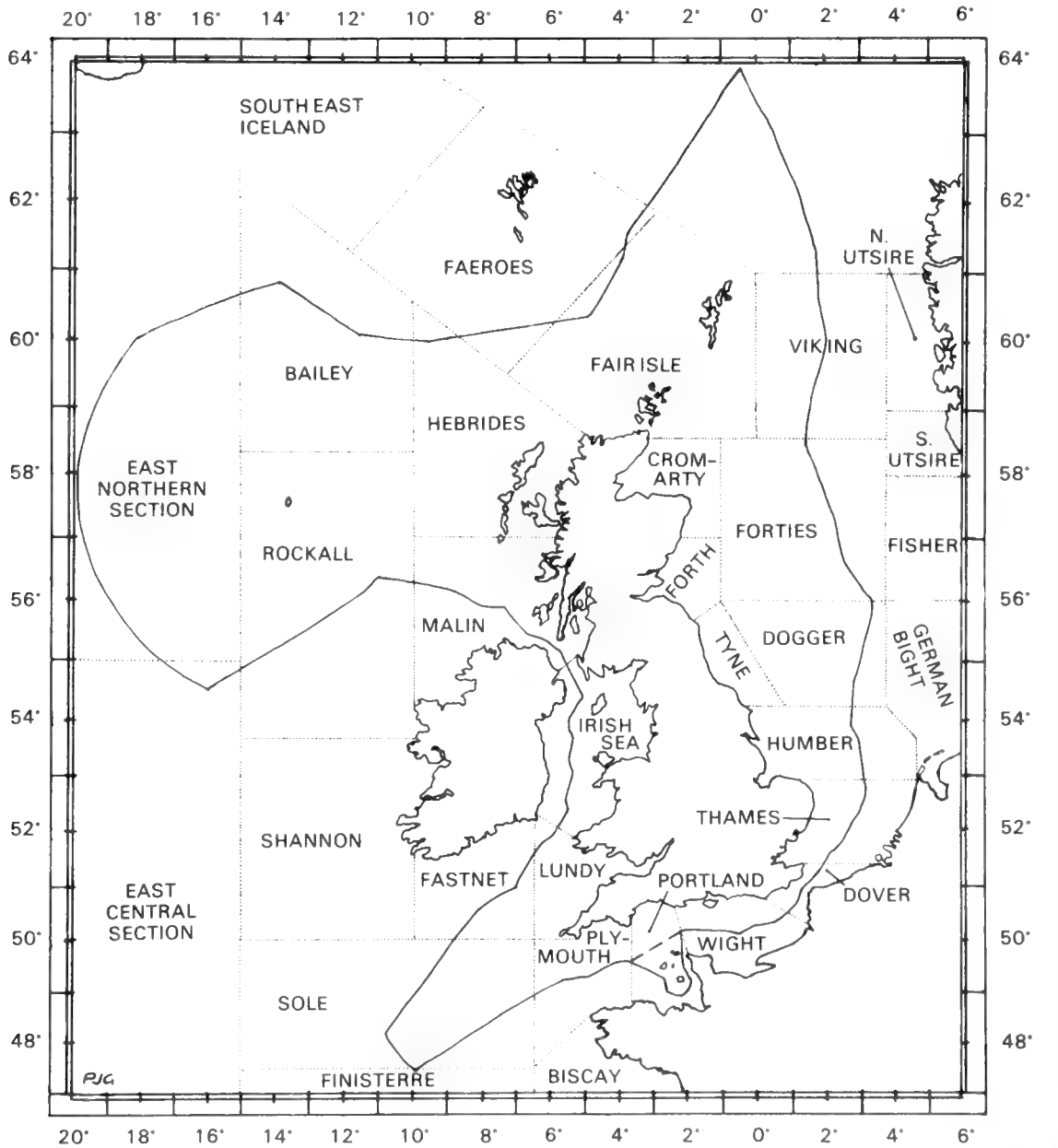


Fig. 1. The solid line marks the offshore boundary for post-1958 rarity records considered by *British Birds* Rarities Committee. The line follows the 200-mile (320-km) UK Fishery Limits, except for the inclusion of the Channel Islands, and the exclusion of Northern Irish waters (the latter covered by the Northern Ireland Bird Records Committee). Sea areas are also shown, their boundaries indicated by dotted lines

the UK and neighbouring countries, except that it includes the Channel Islands (for which the Committee now considers records, at the request of the ornithologists in the Channel Islands) and excludes Northern Irish waters (records for which are assessed by the Northern Ireland Bird Records Committee). This decision, reached in consultation with the BOU Records Committee, is a response to several requests for a clear definition of an offshore limit. Norway, too, has recently adopted a 200-mile/median-line marine boundary for ornithological records, and it is hoped that other European nations will do likewise, thus providing complete recording cover for the whole of European waters. The Committee would welcome submission of any rarity claims from within the newly defined boundary, including retrospective post-1958 claims.

Museum research and archives storage

The Committee has appointed Peter Colston of the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Tring, Hertfordshire, as its Museum Consultant and Archivist. This new appointment recognises the help which Peter has given the Committee over many years, involving reference to specimens at the British Museum. We are grateful to the authorities at the Museum for permission to store part of the Committee's archives there permanently.

Election of new member

Nominations are invited to fill the next vacancy, which will arise on or before 31st March 1986. They should be sent to me by 31st December 1985. The Committee's nomination for this vacancy is John Marchant, whose work for the BTO, and whose knowledge of identification—especially of waders—is well known. John is the co-author of a new book, *Shorebirds: an identification guide to the waders of the world*, to be published early next year.

P. J. Grant, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD

PhotoSpot

15. Oriental Cuckoo

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus* is notoriously difficult to distinguish from Cuckoo *C. canorus* in the field, other than by its diagnostic call, typically rendered 'oo-poo-poo-poo' and recalling a Hoopoe *Upupa epops*. Without direct comparison, many of the differences given in the literature are almost useless in the field. One reasonably helpful field feature is, however, clearly shown in these photographs: the black bars on the underparts are generally broader on Oriental Cuckoo. Thus, a cuckoo with black bars as broad or broader than the white bars is likely to be Oriental Cuckoo, while one with narrower black bars will invariably be Cuckoo.

Oriental Cuckoo breeds widely in the Eastern Palearctic, overlapping



215. Male Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*, USSR, June 1966 (Y. Gordeev)

with Cuckoo over most of its range. Northern populations are long-distance migrants, wintering south to Indonesia and Australia. Now that the species has been claimed in Britain (Spurn, Humberside, spring 1985: plates 245 & 246), its identification will doubtless be thoroughly investigated. Initial examinations of museum specimens by several people, including members of the Rarities Committee, have suggested that the problems may be even more complex than the literature implies.

NIGEL REDMAN

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216. Male Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Suffolk, June 1971 (Eric Hosking)

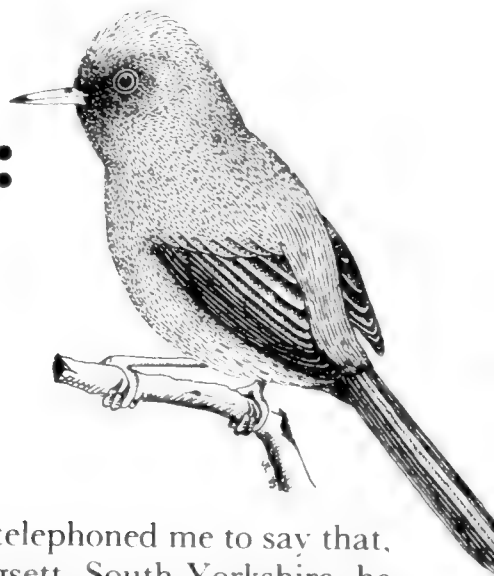




217. Male Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Surrey, May 1974 (F. V. Blackburn)

Marmora's Warbler: new to Britain and Ireland

J. Lunn



In the late evening of 15th May 1982, G. Lee telephoned me to say that, during that day, at Mickleden Clough, Langsett, South Yorkshire, he had watched a small warbler which he could identify only as a Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*. At 07.00 GMT on the following morning, I located the

bird and watched it for about 35 minutes before losing sight of it; shortly afterwards, it was found about 400m down the valley by other observers, including J. E. Dale. Its identity was confirmed as Marmora's Warbler. Throughout the next few months, until 22nd July, the warbler was watched by many hundreds of observers. It was photographed by A. V. Moon (*Brit. Birds* 75: plates 145 & 146), John T. Belsey, S. G. D. Cook and John Hewitt (plates 218-220). The record was subsequently accepted as the first for Marmora's Warbler in Britain and Ireland.

Description

First impressions were of a small warbler, strikingly blue-grey in colour, closely resembling a Dartford Warbler *S. undata* in shape, and with a noticeably long tail.

PLUMAGE Striking: at a distance appeared uniform blue-grey, recalling adult Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, this emphasised by dark vegetation background. At closer range, head appeared darker, especially around lores, and at close quarters various grey-blue hues of varying quality and intensity visible on head and neck. Underparts slightly paler, especially towards belly. Wings grey; remiges often appeared paler, especially in bright light (this effect perhaps caused by outer webs or feather shafts being paler, or reflecting light). Tail variously described as

brown-washed grey or buffy-grey; feather tips appeared abraded.

BARE PARTS Legs originally described as straw-yellow, later as yellow-orange (difference perhaps due to lighting effects?). Bill appeared sharply defined pale at distance, accentuated by dark background and grey plumage; at closer range, upper mandible pale horn, base and lower mandible pale yellow. Eye blood-red, surrounded by blood-red orbital ring, conspicuous at close quarters. Mouth pale straw-yellow, striking when bird singing.

Habitat

Mickleden Clough is a steep-sided gritstone valley situated at 1,400 feet (426m) in the southern Pennines. A small, fast-flowing stream meanders northwards through the valley bottom, where the vegetation is dominated by grasses (*Nardus*, *Agrostis* and *Molinia*) and wet flushes of moss *Sphagnum*, rushes *Juncus* and cottongrass *Eriophorum*. The valley sides are dominated by

218. Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*, South Yorkshire, May-July 1982 (John T. Belsey)



heather *Calluna vulgaris*, bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, cowberry *V. vitis-idaea* and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. Small rocky outcrops and quarries are also a feature of the habitat, as too is an almost complete lack of tree cover apart from isolated rowans *Sorbus aucuparia* and hawthorns *Crataegus monogyna* on the slopes and a line of mature mixed deciduous trees for about 400m in the valley bottom.

General habits and behaviour

Throughout its stay, the warbler frequented the steep eastern side of the valley, and was only occasionally recorded in the valley bottom. It occupied almost exclusively an area of about 400m × 50m (its apparent territory) comprised mainly of heather about 0.5m tall and bilberry interspersed with grass patches and bracken. It was generally very active within this whole area, continuously moving short distances through the vegetation and then flying 30-40m. The warbler frequently perched and sang, usually on top of some heather, but was out of sight to the stationary observer for considerable periods of time. When perched it occasionally cocked its tail to about 45° in Dartford Warbler manner.

The Marmora's Warbler frequently gave display. This was very much like that of a Whitethroat *S. communis*: a steady fluttering ascent to 4-7m above the heather at an angle of 60°-70° to the horizontal, with legs trailing, singing continuously, followed by a very steep undulating dive to alight usually farther down the slope. Display was noted over the whole length of the warbler's territory, and no particular song perches were used exclusively. Collection and carrying of nest material (dry grasses and cobwebs) was seen on a number of occasions, especially during the early part of the bird's stay.

The warbler attempted to catch flying insects just above the vegetation, and also moved through the vegetation as if foliage-gleaning. On one occasion, I observed it moving over bare ground under the heather in the manner of a Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, apparently foraging.

No agonistic interactions were reported with any of the breeding Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*, Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* and Whinchats *Saxicola rubetra*. Only one other *Sylvia* warbler was noted in the vicinity: a Garden Warbler *S. borin* on 16th May; again, no encounter was observed.

Voice

The Marmora's Warbler frequently sang throughout the day, at times almost continuously, and often this was the only indication of its presence. The individual song seemed to comprise a two-to-three-second phrase of a weak warbling quality, lacking both strong notes and rich tone; a diagnostic trill, recalling a weak or distant snatch of Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* or Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* song, often punctuated and invariably terminated the song. The tonal range was narrow, and the total impression was of a weak quality, recalling Dunnock.

A call note was heard infrequently. I described it as a sharp 'twik', typical of *Sylvia*, but having a more chat-like quality.



219. Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*, South Yorkshire, May 1982 (S. G. D. Cook)

Status and distribution of Marmora's Warbler

The distribution of Marmora's Warbler is shown in fig. 1. Two races are generally accepted. The race *balearica* is confined to the Balearic Islands (Vaurie 1959), where it is largely resident (Berthold & Berthold 1973; Serra 1978). The nominate race *sarda* breeds in Corsica, Sardinia and possibly Sicily, and winters in North Africa (Vaurie 1959); it is also present in Spain on the Mediterranean coast (e.g. Rolfe 1965; Iribarren 1968; Wallace & Sage 1969; Navarro Medina 1972) and even inland (e.g. Jeffrey 1969; van Impe 1971), and has been recorded on southward passage in Gibraltar (Cortes *et al.* 1980). This same race has also been found on many of the smaller islands and islets scattered through the western Mediterranean, although its distribution there is, like that of the Dartford Warbler, poorly understood (e.g. Erard *et al.* 1972): both species occur on some islands, only one of either species on others, while neither is present on yet other islands (Moltoni 1967, 1968a, 1968b, 1970). Marmora's Warbler has been recorded on passage, commonly in some years, on Malta, where it has also bred (Bannerman & Vella-Gaffiero 1976).

In North Africa, Marmora's Warbler is a winter visitor to Algeria, Tunisia and Libya, and accidental in Egypt (Etchécopar & Hüe 1967); in Tunisia, it may also be a rare and sporadic breeder (Thomsen & Jacobsen 1979). Numbers fluctuate, however, and the species can be rare in some years and common in others, for example in Libya (Bundy 1976).

Marmora's Warbler has been recorded occasionally in northern Italy, in Liguria and Calabria (Toschi 1969; Spano & Podesta 1981). There is one



Fig. 1. Distribution of Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*: breeding stippled; winter hatched; isolated records large dots

authenticated record from Roussillon, southwest France, on 28th April 1973 (Affre 1974); although other observers (e.g. Siebert 1970) have claimed Marmora's Warbler in this region, both Affre (1974) and Yeatman (1976) maintained only the one mainland French record.

Origin

The occurrence of a Marmora's Warbler some 2,100km north of its previously known range immediately raises questions concerning its origin. The possibility that it had escaped from captivity is insignificant, since, although some Mediterranean *Sylvia* warblers are kept in captivity in Britain, the number of Marmora's is probably tiny, if indeed the species is kept at all (T. Inskipp *in litt.*). Furthermore, the likelihood of an aviculturist losing or deliberately releasing a male in near-immaculate breeding plumage (and presumably valuable) which was not even close-ringed is too remote to be plausible. Vagrancy by the subtly different Balearic race (Williamson 1976) can also effectively be discounted owing to its sedentary nature.

220. Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*, South Yorkshire, May-July 1982 (John Hewitt)



The most likely solution seems to be a spring overshoot of the nominate race, which would correspond closely to the records on the French and Italian Mediterranean coasts in mid or late April. Climatic conditions prevailing at and just before the time of the Yorkshire bird's arrival, with high pressure building on the Continent and a warm southerly airstream originating well to the south, also support this view.

As usual in May, various typical Mediterranean species, such as Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans* and Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*, were all recorded in Britain on 15th or 16th May 1982 (Rogers *et al.* 1983). Perhaps even more significant was the occurrence in early June of another typical North African species, a White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, in Norfolk; full details will be published shortly.

Discussion

A remarkable correlation in habitat occurs between that of the Yorkshire bird and the species' natural biotope on the Mediterranean islands. Along with the sympatric Subalpine, Dartford, Sardinian *S. melanocephala* and Spectacled Warblers *S. conspicillata*, Marmora's is generally considered a bird of dry scrub and *maquis* (Vooous 1960). In Sardinia, it frequents the higher hills of the interior (Diesselhorst 1971), and in Corsica is found at up to 3,000 feet (915m) (Ferguson-Lees & Armitage 1955). In a detailed study of habitat selection of the above five warblers, Cody & Walter (1976) concluded that interspecific-segregation mechanisms occur over a habitat gradient correlated with foraging and vegetation heights; Marmora's Warbler tends to occupy distinct territories of low vegetational height and diversity. At Langsett, the warbler occupied a similarly relatively high-altitude habitat of low diversity and structure.

Cody & Walter (1976) also found that larger territory size was inversely correlated with vegetation height. This ties in well with the large territory of the Yorkshire Marmora's, and is also reported for the Balearic race (Berthold & Berthold 1973). Optimal food availability probably accounts for this: larger territories of low vegetation or smaller territories of higher vegetation being equivalent for energy requirements. Curiously enough, in its low-scrub habitat on the Mediterranean mainland, Marmora's Warbler is pre-empted by Dartford Warbler, which in turn occupies in England an atypical habitat which in the Mediterranean would be occupied by Sardinian Warbler (Cody & Walter 1976).

Being confined to low vegetation, it is not surprising that Marmora's Warbler tends to forage at low levels. Some peculiarities in feeding

behaviour similar to those of the Yorkshire bird have also been noted by Diesselhorst (1971), who mentioned similarities to Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* or Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*.

Summary

An adult male Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* was present at Langsett, South Yorkshire, from 15th May to 22nd July 1982. Details are given of its appearance, display and general behaviour, voice and habitat. The species' status and distribution is reviewed, and the probable origin of this, the first-ever record of Marmora's Warbler for Britain and Ireland, is deduced. The species' habitat in the Mediterranean and in Yorkshire is discussed.

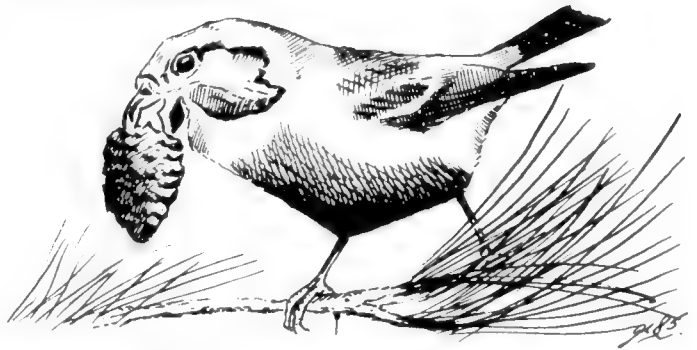
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Parrot Crossbills in Britain

Graham P. Catley
and David Hursthouse



Following an exceptional influx of Parrot Crossbills *Loxia pytyopsittacus* into Britain in the autumn of 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 46, plates 12, 13 & 220) and subsequent wintering records, we decided to summarise all known past records of this species in Britain and to analyse the 1982/83 influx in the light of previous records and information from other European countries. Notes on those observed in 1982/83 also led to points regarding field identification and behaviour.

Status of the species

The Parrot Crossbill's breeding range is generally quoted (e.g. Vaurie 1959) as extending from Norway, Finland and Sweden east to northern Russia and sporadically south to the Baltic provinces, Poland, the German Democratic Republic and occasionally Denmark. It is nowhere very common, and in the USSR is comparatively common only in the northwest (Dementiev & Gladkov 1954). Breeding densities, like those of the Crossbill *L. curvirostra*, tend to be higher where there is a good crop of the preferred food source, in the case of Parrot Crossbills cones of pines *Pinus*. As the pine has a more consistent cone crop than the spruce *Picea*, the preferred food of the Crossbill, however, Parrot Crossbills can usually adjust to local food shortages by making smaller migratory movements than the highly migratory Crossbill (Nethersole-Thompson 1975). Thus, the Parrot Crossbill may be described as more of a resident or partly erratically eruptive species than the eruptive Crossbill. Migrants regularly reach southern Sweden and Denmark, mostly in late autumn and winter, and occasionally the Federal German Republic, and the species has been recorded exceptionally as far west as Britain and central Europe and also east into Siberia.

Parrot Crossbills usually breed from March to May, and are occasionally double-brooded, nesting through to August-September if there is a good cone crop. Breeding is timed so that hatching coincides with the opening of the pine cones, which facilitates feeding of the young.

Status in Britain

Many past references to the status of the Parrot Crossbill in Britain were confounded by the earlier classification of the Scottish Crossbill *L. scotica* as

a race of Parrot Crossbill. All records of Parrot Crossbills in Britain from 1958 onwards have recently been assessed by the Rarities Committee, following requests in *British Birds* (71: 525). Of earlier records published elsewhere, notably in *The Status of Birds in Britain and Ireland* (British Ornithologists' Union 1971) and in Davis (1963, 1964a), those for which no details could be traced have been omitted. All acceptable pre-1958 records for Britain are given in table 1. All the dated records, involving 13 occurrences and 18 individuals, fall in the period September-March.

There were no further records until a notable influx in the autumn of 1962, with subsequent winter records (Davis 1963, 1964a). The full details of this influx have not previously appeared in one place and a full account is therefore given below; all records have now been accepted by the Rarities Committee, except those marked with an asterisk(*), which we, however, consider acceptable.

Table 1. Apparently acceptable records of Parrot Crossbills *Loxia pytyopsittacus* in Britain before 1958

County	Locality	Date	Remarks	Source
Suffolk	Blythburgh	1818	Female taken	Payn 1978
Suffolk	near Bury St Edmunds	Nov. 1850	Male shot	Payn 1978
Norfolk	Riddlesworth	about 1851	Male shot	Seago 1977
Gloucestershire	near Cheltenham	late Nov. 1861	Male and female killed	Swaine 1982
Essex	near Colchester	on/just before 21.2.1862	Male and two females shot	Cox 1984
Middlesex	Southgate	Nov. 1864	Imm. male shot; female also shot, but unfortunately prepared for the table (!)	Glegg 1935
Kent	near Plumstead (Bostal Common)	Jan. 1868	Female obtained	Ticehurst 1909
Sussex	St Leonard's Forest	Mar. 1870	Shot	Shrubbs 1979
Norfolk	Earlham	22.3.1888	Two females shot from a flock of seven 'crossbills'	Seago 1977
Devon	Marley, near Exmouth	1892 ¹	Male obtained	D'Urban & Mathew 1892; Lowe 1939
Norfolk	Langham	Sept. 1907	Male	Seago 1977
Fife	Isle of May	18.9.1953	Female, trapped	Eggeling 1960
Northumberland	near Catcleugh	16.9.1954	Imm. male killed by car; in company with another red and two green 'crossbills'	Temperley 1955

1. *The Handbook* gives this Devon record as 1892, quoting from *Ibis* 1939; it may, however, refer to January 1888, when several were shot from a large flock that remained for a few weeks (*Zoologist* 1888: 105).



221. Male Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Netherlands, February 1983 (Jan AM van Laar)

The 1962/63 influx

This influx was concentrated initially in the Northern Isles, with 33, including 16 trapped, on Fair Isle, Shetland, during 27th September-10th October. A single male was trapped from a party of four (three females, one female*) at Quendale, Shetland, on 7th October, with one remaining until 13th; and two birds were seen on North Rona* on 9th October, with one still present on 11th (Dennis & Waters 1968). Another influx occurred on Fair Isle on 11th October, when 25, including 20 trapped, arrived; some were still present on 19th. Four Parrot Crossbills were on Uig, Western Isles, from 11th to 13th October: two males being trapped on 11th, and a male and a female trapped on 13th (Davis 1964b; Reynolds 1964). Also on 11th, a first-winter male and a female were trapped at Spurn, Humberside, the male being found dead on 12th. A male was found dead at Spiggie*, Shetland, on 12th October; and a single male occurred on Fair Isle on 29th.

There were no further records until a male was found dead at Hartsholme Gravel-pits, Lincoln, on 16th January 1963. Subsequent observations showed there to be a flock of up to nine at this site in January, with three to four through February and a pair to at least 25th May. During this period, a female was found dead on 17th March and another female with an injured wing was taken into care in mid March. It escaped, and was still in the area up to early 1964. (It seemed likely that local youths with air-guns were responsible for the dead and injured birds.) (Atkin 1964)

Two further 1963 records concerned two presumed emigrants on Fair Isle on 20th March, and a female, trapped (with two Crossbills), at Wisley, Surrey, on 15th May.

All 1962-63 records fell in the period from 27th September to 25th May. The vast majority, 61 out of a total of 85, were on Fair Isle.

Records during 1963-82

During 1963-82, there were only four records of Parrot Crossbills in Britain, despite the huge increase in the number, and competence, of observers over this period. A male was discovered in Wells Wood, Norfolk, on 10th-12th November 1966 (details of a male there on 28th September 1966 are required by the Rarities Committee). In 1975, three occurred within two days: a male killed by a cat at Grutness, Shetland, on 22nd October; a male on the same day at Spurn; and a female, found injured at Tophill Low, Humberside, on 23rd, which subsequently died.

The real absence of records at well-watched coastal localities and bird observatories during 1963-82 does suggest that there was no marked influx into Britain in this period.



222. Male Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*. Norfolk, November 1983 (Roger Tidman)

The 1982/83 influx

All of the early 1982/83 records were on the British east coast or in the Northern Isles. The first was a male on Fair Isle on 7th October*, followed by six there on 8th and another male on 10th*. A first-winter individual trapped at Spurn on 11th died overnight. A male was found at Humberston Fitties, Humberside, on the same day and there were two males there on 12th, the first staying to 15th and the second to 23rd. Other connected arrivals on 12th included single males in Lincolnshire, at Grainthorpe and Ingoldmells (both found exhausted, and subsequently died); two females on Fair Isle, one of which was trapped and stayed until 29th; and another male trapped at Catfirth, Shetland. On 16th, there was one on Burray*, and a party of six was found at Vaxter, Shetland, where three males and a juvenile were trapped and two additional females seen on 18th, with another male on 19th and at least one male to 25th. Despite many claims, the only Norfolk record accepted concerned an immature male at Wells Wood on 16th-17th October. A male was trapped at Wick, Caithness, also on 17th, and on 18th there were females at Voe and Strand, both Shetland.



223. Male Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Humberside, October 1982 (Graham P. Calley)

the latter also being seen on 19th. There was then a record from the Western Isles, a female and four juveniles at Langass on 21st, with a female found dead at Lyrawa Plantation, Orkney, on 29th.

Following these coastal records came a series of reports of wintering flocks from inland localities. Parties were first noted at Howden Reservoir, Derbyshire/South Yorkshire, and Hollingdale Plantation, South Yorkshire, on 30th October, and at Wyming Brook, South Yorkshire, on 31st. At Howden, numbers increased from seven (four males, three females) on 30th October to a maximum of 25 (ten males, 11 females, four immatures) from 15th November to 10th January 1983; thereafter, there were 20 until 3rd February and then a rapid dispersal, with the last (a male) on 13th February. At Hollingdale, there were 12 on 30th October, with up to 12 until 10th January and two pairs still present on 13th February. The Wyming Brook party numbered 14 (seven males, seven females) from 31st October to 22nd December. After the main dispersal from these three closely associated sites, there was a series of records at Langsett, South Yorkshire, with a minimum of 11 individuals from 23rd February to 7th May; these were regarded as additional to the other South Yorkshire records by the Rarities Committee (Rogers *et al.* 1984), but are here counted as partly the same birds.

Away from this main concentration, there were two Parrot Crossbills in Hamsterley Forest, Tyne & Wear: a female from 28th December to 2nd January and a male on the latter date. At North Winksley, North Yorkshire, another wintering party of up to 12 (three males, nine immatures) was found on 29th January, remaining until 24th February. In Speyside,



224. Male Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, Suffolk, March 1974 (Simon Cox)

Highland, there were a male and two females on 11th April*.

Assuming that the Langsett crossbills relate to some of the dispersing Howden/Hollingdale individuals, the minimum total for the influx from October 1982 to May 1983 is 104 individuals.

Following this major influx, there were two records in autumn 1983: a first-winter male was trapped on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 2nd October*, and a party of seven (four males, two females, one immature male) was discovered at Wells Wood on 26th October. Most of the latter were present until 20th November, with at least three (a male, a female and the immature) staying into 1984 and subsequently rearing two broods of young, the first fully proven breeding record for the species in Britain. These may have been autumn immigrants, or just possibly birds 'left over' from the previous influx. These last eight birds take the grand total for Britain to 219: 18 before 1958; 85 in 1962/63; four during 1963-82; 104 in 1982/83; and eight in 1983/84.

Additional 'crossbill' records in 1982/83

Once it was appreciated that an influx of Parrot Crossbills had taken place, there were a number of claims of birds looking 'large-billed'. This alone was of course not sufficient for formal acceptance as Parrot Crossbills, but there were no doubt some of this species which were missed, or just not fully recorded. The following were probably Parrot Crossbills, but were not seen in enough detail to be acceptable as such. On Fair Isle, in addition to those noted, there were 22 crossbills on 8th October and three on 12th. At Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, there were singles on 13th and 24th October and three on 14th November. Six crossbills at Knapp Inchtute, Perthshire, on 21st October were possibly Parrots. A flock of 25-30 at North Walsham,



225. Adult female Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, Suffolk, February 1974 (Simon Cox)

Norfolk, from 6th to 11th March may well have included Parrots; the rapid disappearance of this flock suggested that they might have been departing winter visitors.

The number of Crossbills involved in the 1982/83 influx was impossible to determine. Very few were reported in response to a request in *British Birds* (76: 237), and several of those that were, notably birds seen only in flight, appear not to have been seen well enough to determine that they were definite Crossbills as opposed to Parrot Crossbills. In Wells Wood, only one bird from a flock of nine was accepted as a Parrot, but others were described as large-billed, although evidently some were definite Crossbills. Also at the time of the influx, in North Norfolk, five birds at Sheringham on 17th October and one flying west at Titchwell were noted as Crossbills. There were also two or three at Lound, Essex, on 6th October and a single identified as a Crossbill at Hornchurch, Essex, from 2nd to 6th October which fed on crab apples in a suburban garden. At Foreness, Kent, three individuals during the main influx were recorded as Crossbills: on 8th, 15th and 24th October.

Further records of Crossbills during the 1982/83 winter were mainly from the South Yorkshire/Derbyshire sites, where they are relatively infrequent, and also from a few other inland areas where they are irregular. There is no way of ascertaining how many of these may have been involved in the initial late-autumn influx.

Records outside Britain

Information from Scandinavia and the rest of Europe gives a good idea of the extent of the irruption, but little clue to its cause. Reports suggested that

there were no unusually high breeding numbers of Parrot Crossbills in Norway and Sweden in 1982. In Norway, though, there was an almost total failure of the pine-cone crop in 1982, which 'maybe meant that birds migrating south passed through without stopping' (Geoffrey Acklam *in litt.*). If the failure extended farther east, it could also have been a factor in instigating the irruption. Evidence from Sweden suggested a north Scandinavian origin for the majority of the irrupting crossbills, and Lennart Risberg (*in litt.*) noted: 'I doubt if the influx had a very easterly origin.' At Ottenby Bird Observatory, in the Baltic, only two Parrot Crossbills were ringed in autumn 1982, but this equalled the total ringed there during 1945-81. There were other reports from the area around Stockholm, on the east coast of Sweden, but most reports came from the south and centre.

Geographically, the irruption was concentrated in southern Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and Britain. There were no records from France, Austria or Switzerland. Few were reported from south Norway, although those that were were considered highly unusual; as noted above, the lack of pine cones may have led to birds passing over quickly without halting. Notable Norwegian records were of singles at Molen Bird Observatory, Vestfold, on 13th and 17th October; and of five trapped on the island of Utsira during 9th-13th October, compared with only one Crossbill (there had previously been only two Parrots caught on Utsira). Note the coincidence of these dates with arrivals on the British east coast and in the Northern Isles.

In the southern Swedish province of Skåne, the influx of Parrot Crossbills was described as 'magnificent'. Little information on actual numbers is available, but 180 were noted in the adjacent province of Blekinge in November-December, which was more than usual. At a bird observatory on the north shore of Lake Vänern (59° 30'N), 1,400 crossbills were counted

226. Female Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Norfolk, December 1983 (Roger Tidman)





227 & 228. Male Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Humberside, October 1982 (Graham P. Catley)

migrating in the autumn, but true numbers were estimated at twice that figure. At Falsterbo Bird Observatory, Skåne, 1,200 migrant crossbills were noted from October, an estimated 90% being Parrots; again, these numbers were higher than usual.

In the Netherlands, where up to 1982 there were only nine confirmed records of Parrot Crossbill, a marked invasion occurred from the second half of October. The first report was on the isle of Terschelling on 23rd September, but few others were identified until several groups of tens of individuals were recorded on the Waddensee islands from the second half of October. Several parties were then discovered on the mainland coast in the first half of November, and maximum numbers were recorded from December to early March. At most wintering sites, numbers remained fairly constant through the winter. Flocks left the southern mainland coast from January, all having gone by mid February. Those on the Waddensee islands stayed until late April, and there were several instances of breeding behaviour, including nest-building, but 'no real breeding attempts seem to have been made' (Hans Schekkerman *in litt.*). The few reports from inland sites were mostly during February-March in Drenthe and the Veluwe area, where there are large areas of pine forests. In the latter area, however, there was successful breeding by more than one pair in both 1983 and 1984. The total number of Parrot Crossbills involved in the Netherlands was estimated at 275-325. Most were in the coastal pine forests: 70 and 100 in Zuid Holland and Noord Holland, respectively, and 100-120 on the Waddensee islands.

In Denmark, 1982/83 produced the biggest invasion ever recorded, far

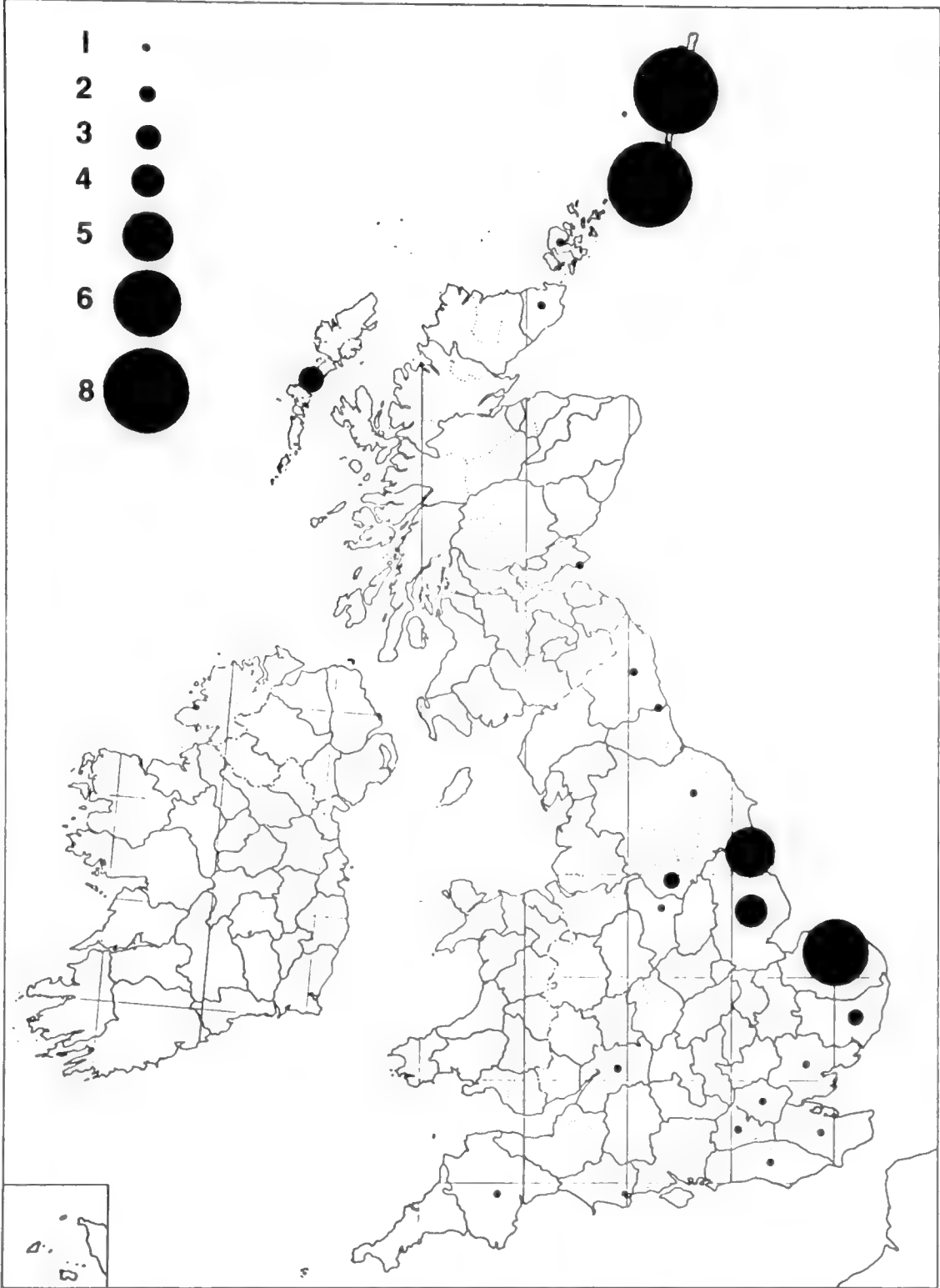


Fig. 1. Geographical distribution of records of Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* in Britain

exceeding the previous largest (300 individuals in 1975/76). Parrot Crossbills were noted from 2nd October until 13th May, with the following monthly pattern: October, 81; November, 697; December, 775; January, 486; February, 3,746; March, 683; April, 43; May, three. The largest flocks were of 140, at Gardbogard, Vendyssel, on 29th December; then 480 on 15th February, 570 on 25th February, and 285 on 12th March, all at Skagen, Vendyssel. Following the influx, Parrots bred in more places in

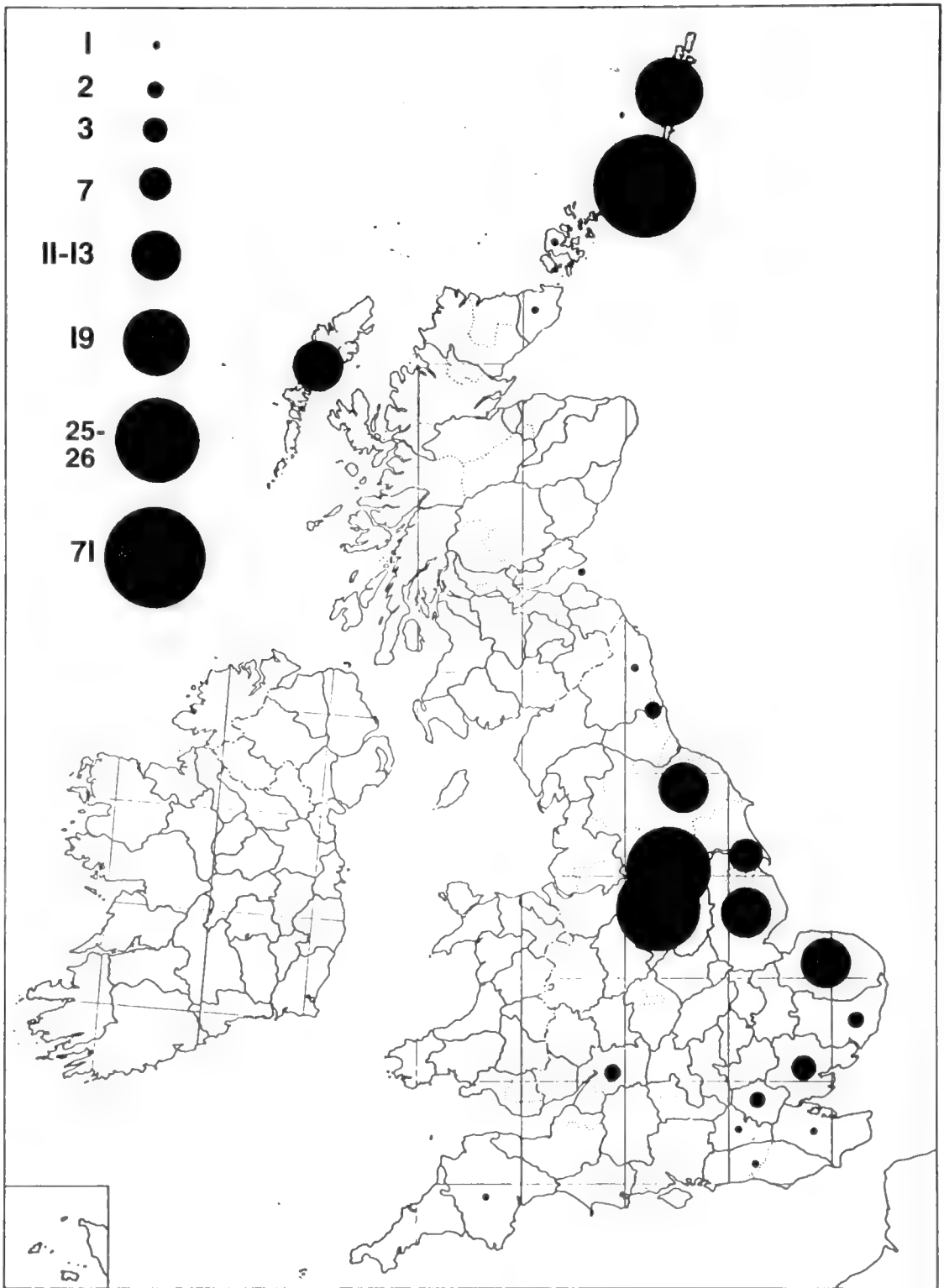


Fig. 2. Geographical distribution of number of individuals of Parrot Crossbills *Loxia pytyopsittacus* in Britain

Denmark in spring and summer 1983 than before, although previous breeding records were rather few (A. P. Moller *in litt.*).

Pattern of occurrence in Britain

The geographical distribution of all Parrot Crossbill records in Britain is shown in fig. 1, and of numbers of individuals in fig. 2. All records are plotted by current county boundaries, apart from Fair Isle, which has been

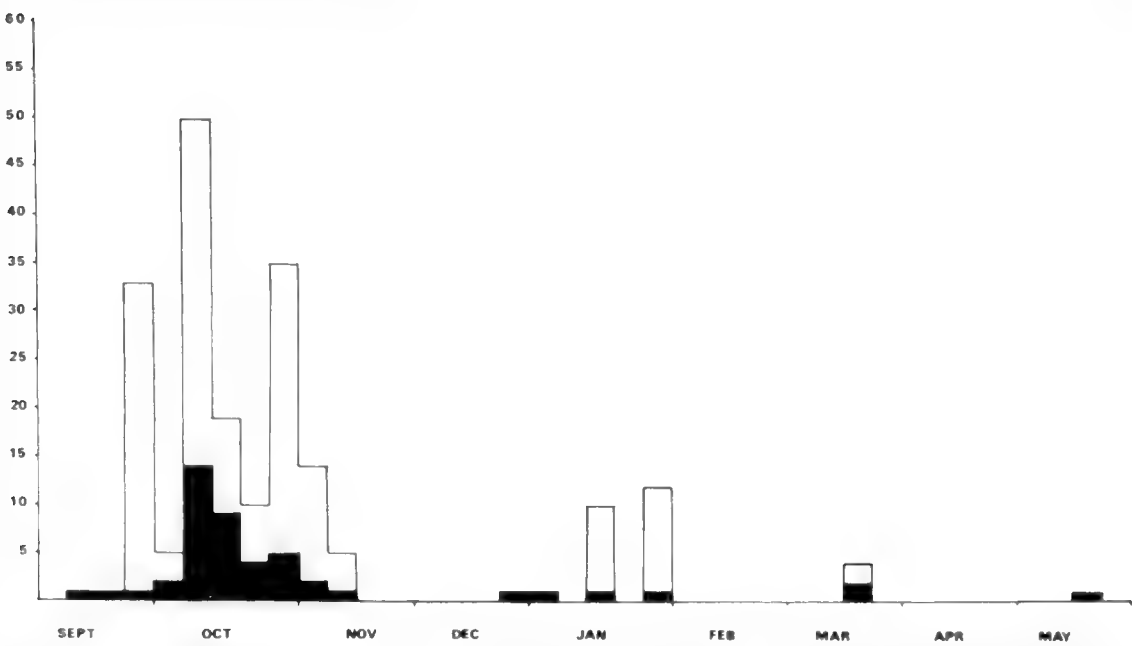


Fig. 3. Monthly distribution of all dated records of Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* in Britain. Only first date of occurrence plotted. Open columns = total number of individuals; filled columns = number of different records

plotted separately from Shetland. The temporal distribution of all dated records is shown in fig. 3, with the two major influxes, 1962/63 (fig. 4) and 1982/83 (fig. 5), also given separately. In all cases, only the first date of each occurrence is plotted.

A study of the accepted records reveals a clear-cut pattern, with initial arrivals on the East Coast and in the Northern Isles in late autumn (September-November), followed by sporadic wintering of small flocks inland. About 80% of all records fall between 16th September and 15th November, and it is most probable that the two wintering flocks located in January 1963 and January 1983 had already been in the areas from the previous autumns. Compared with the Crossbill, the majority of which usually arrive in June-August in irruption years, the Parrot Crossbill is therefore a late immigrant, often associated with major arrivals of Scandinavian winter visitors and the occurrence of Asiatic vagrants on the East

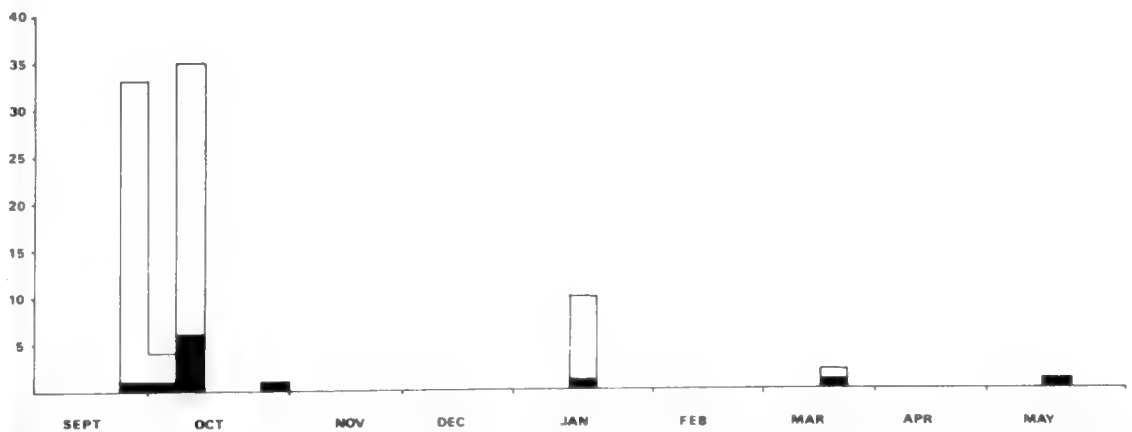


Fig. 4. Monthly distribution of records of Parrot Crossbills *Loxia pytyopsittacus* in Britain in 1962/63. Only first dates plotted. Open columns = total number of individuals; filled columns = number of records

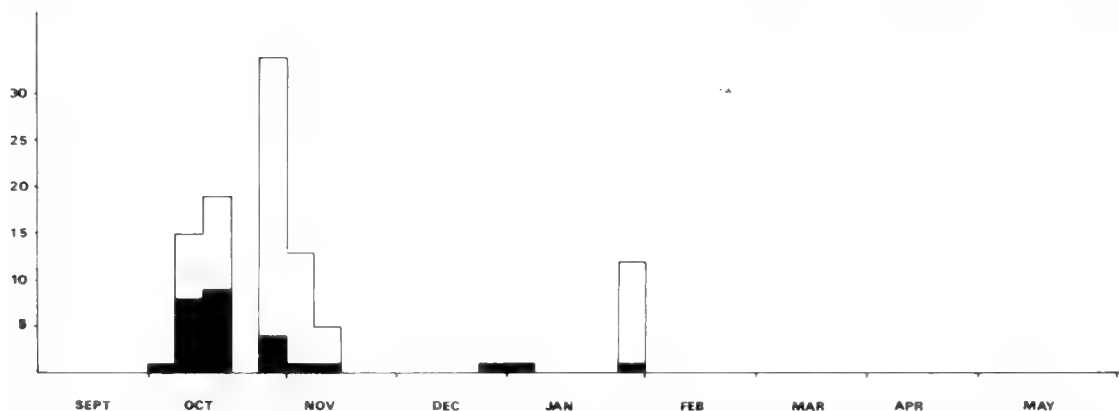


Fig. 5. Monthly distribution of records of Parrot Crossbills *Loxia pytyopsittacus* in Britain in 1982/83. Only first dates plotted. Open columns = total number of individuals; filled columns = number of records

Coast. This pattern is similar to that in Denmark, where Parrot Crossbills are more regular in winter and most arrive from October-November, with varying numbers remaining to March-April (Moller 1979).

In Britain, the wintering flocks, once established in an area, were very stable in numbers during November-January, but thereafter became less compact as birds began to depart by February-March (cf. Netherlands data for 1982/83).

Comparison between 1962/63 and 1982/83 influxes

The precise timings of the two major influxes of Parrot Crossbills into Britain were very similar, with most arriving during October and being concentrated from Lincolnshire north to Shetland (see figs. 4 and 5). The bulk (71%) of the 1962/63 records, however, were on Fair Isle, and only 13% came from inland sites; by contrast, only 10% of those in 1982/83 were on Fair Isle, but 65% came from inland localities. These figures are, of

229. Male Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Norfolk, March 1984 (Roger Tidman)





230. Adult male Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, Suffolk, March/April 1974 (Simon Cox)

course, based on the numbers of individuals recorded. The high total found inland in 1982/83 was almost certainly partly a result of the huge increase in the number of active observers, and the increased knowledge of field identification, between 1963 and 1982. Thus, no real comparison of numbers of birds involved in the two influxes is possible; indeed one is tempted to suggest that many more Parrots than those recorded must have been present in 1962/63, especially as there were marked invasions of Crossbills in both 1962 and 1963, the presence of which probably also served to mask the occurrence of Parrots. Nevertheless, Parrot Crossbills are still not easy birds to identify in the field, and undoubtedly there were other records in 1982/83 which were not formally verified.

That several of the 1982 Parrot Crossbills arrived at the same time as a pronounced East Coast 'fall' of Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* and Asiatic passerines (Howey & Bell 1985) suggests that they had been caught up in a general westward migration associated with easterly winds blowing around a huge high-pressure system situated over Scandinavia and Russia during October. The proximate factor which led to the initial movement of Parrot Crossbills remains unclear. Evidence from Scandinavia and other European countries suggests that there was not just a postulated shift of wintering area, as shown by the Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* in 1973/74 and 1974/75 (Scott 1978), but a definite irruption.

Identification of Parrot Crossbills

The identification of large-billed crossbills noted in Britain from autumn 1982 to spring 1983 as Parrot Crossbills rather than Scottish Crossbills was based on a number of factors: (i) measurement of trapped birds; (ii) photographs of individuals involved; (iii) arrival on the East Coast suggestive of Scandinavian origin; (iv) the large-scale influx of Parrot Crossbills into other West European countries; (v) the fact that the Scottish Crossbill

population is relatively small and sedentary, and has never been recorded south of Perth (56°21'N) (Dr A. G. Knox *in litt.*). No attempt has been made to compare Parrot and Scottish Crossbills below; all comparisons are with Crossbill.



231. Male Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Humberside, October 1982 (Graham P. Catley)

Field identification

The following summary is a compilation of criteria which became apparent during extensive observations of Parrot Crossbills in Britain in 1982/83, with appropriate reference to previous works. It is not intended as the 'last word' in Parrot Crossbill identification, but as a guide to assist observers confronted by possible Parrots in the future. Like several other closely related species, for example Reed *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and Marsh Warblers *A. palustris*, identification is not easy and depends on good views, close study, skill, and experience of the commoner species. Like many of the species breeding in the northern boreal forests, however, Parrot Crossbills are frequently very tame away from their native habitat, and so are often easy to photograph: a good photograph of a suspected Parrot will enable much easier confirmation of identity than an attempt to quantify certain characteristics in words.

PLUMAGE

Reliable differences in plumage between adult Parrot Crossbill and Crossbill do not exist. From our experience in Britain in 1982/83, we would suggest, however, that: male Parrots usually appear duller, deeper crimson-red, with a more pronounced greyish nape and mantle; while females tend to appear duller and greyer in colour than Crossbills, especially about the head, neck, nape and mantle, and thus show a more contrasting brighter back and rump (this area tends to be greener than the even brighter yellow-green of Crossbill).

The moult patterns of crossbills and their adoption of yellow- and

orange-type plumages are rather complex and not fully understood. Individuals with orange or yellow feathers need not be immatures, and likewise red males may be in first-winter plumage. A narrow white or buffish wingbar, formed by the pale tips to the outer three to five greater coverts, is sometimes present on Parrot Crossbills. This feature was noted as species-diagnostic by Newton (1972) and Davis (1963). It is, however, also found on Crossbill, and Ticehurst (1915) considered it a reliable means of distinguishing Crossbills in first-winter plumage. The outer one to five greater coverts are sometimes retained after the post-juvenile moult, and if present their pale tips are a means of ageing first-year Crossbills, until they are worn off or the feathers are moulted in the following summer. There is no reason to suppose that the same is not true also of Parrot Crossbills, and thus this feature cannot be regarded as species-diagnostic.

STRUCTURE

Measurements clearly show that Parrot Crossbills are bigger than Crossbills, having larger body size, greater weight, longer wings and tails, and deeper bills. In the field, Parrots do tend to look 'bigger' when Crossbills are present for comparison; they look bulky and big-headed. They

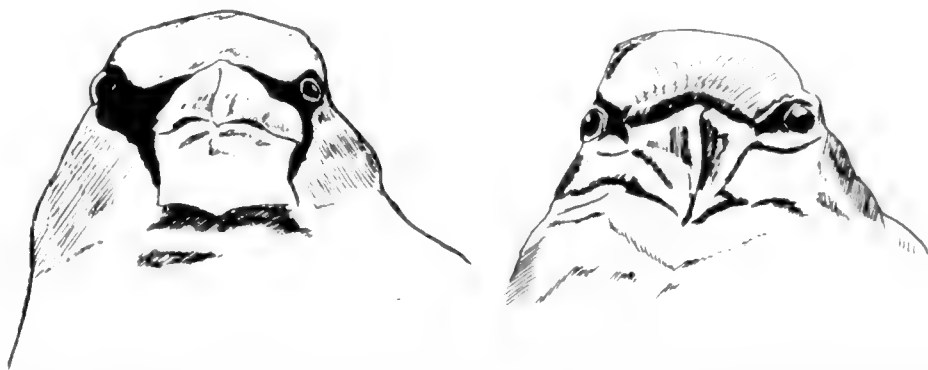


Fig. 6. Head-on views of Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* and Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (Graham P. Catley)

have been noted as looking about 10% larger than Crossbill and have even been likened to a small Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* in structure. The accompanying drawings (figs. 6-10) are based on photographs and field observations.

HEAD AND NECK

The appearance of a Parrot Crossbill's head and bill often draws comparison with that of a Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*, especially when seen head-on (fig. 6). Parrots look heavy, strong, thickset, bulky and lacking a pronounced forehead, an effect heightened by the flatter crown. The bird seems to have its greatest bulk at the front, but the breast can also appear deep and full. The heavy front is emphasised when seen head-on, as the flat crown, broad, wide forehead, full 'cheeks' and broad-based bill all combine to create this effect (fig. 6). When alarmed, in threat display, and sometimes when singing, the crown feathers are raised in a semi-crest which gives the crown a more dome-shaped appearance (plate 221); they

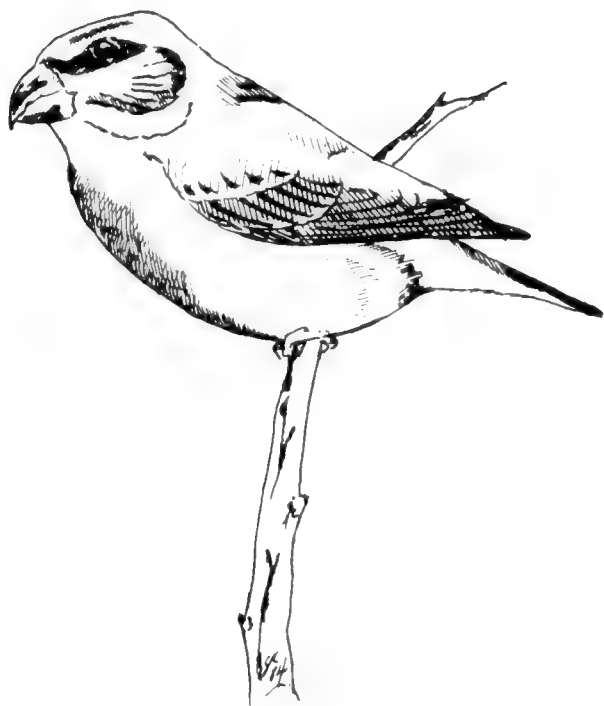


Fig. 7. Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* perched (Graham P. Catley)

do not, therefore, always show a flat forehead. The neck is often hunched and may give the impression of loose feathering, creating a ruff-like effect.

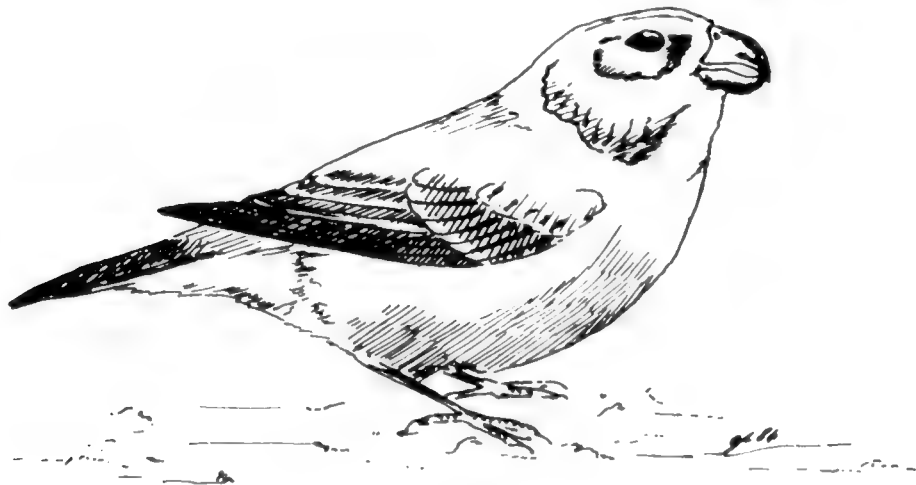
WINGS

Parrot Crossbills do sometimes appear long-winged in the field, and the effect of the flight feathers cloaking the tail again tends to add more bulk to the front of the bird.

BILL

Adult type The bill of Parrot Crossbill is indeed more like that of a parrot (Psittaciformes), being deeper and broad at the base and hefty-looking. On most individuals, the upper mandible curves down smoothly and evenly along its whole length; but on some the culmen at the base levels out, being flatter for the 2-3mm near the skull. The tip only just projects beyond the

Fig. 8. Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* on ground (Graham P. Catley)



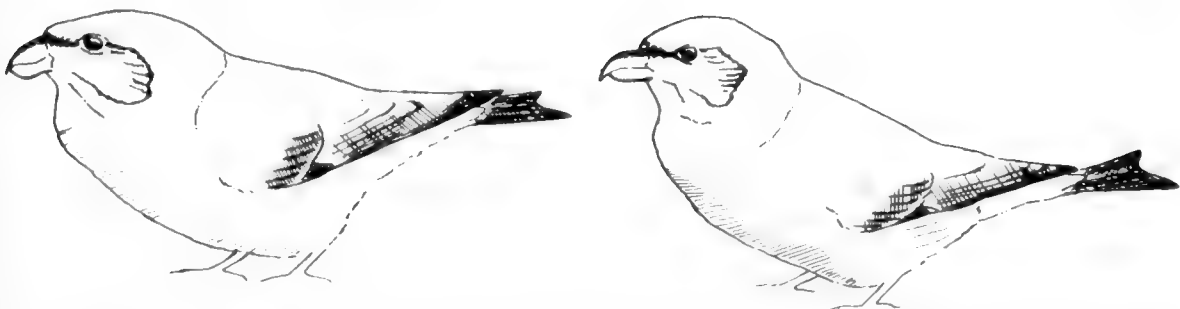


Fig. 9. Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (left) and Crossbill *L. curvirostra* (right) to show comparative jizz on the ground (Graham P. Catley)

lower mandible, if at all, but odd individuals, apparently mostly first-years, do show more extension. Adults' bills are possibly more worn after the breeding season and thus less pointed. The lower mandible has a distinct shape, with a pronounced bulge at the base of the gonys and a rather blunt tip, which again seldom projects above the ridge of the upper mandible. The cutting edge of both mandibles is a pale ivory colour, much more pronounced than on Crossbill.

The bill may look almost as deep as it is long, an effect heightened by the bird often holding the mandibles slightly opened while eating (often a good time to observe bill shape, as the head is held still). The bill of Crossbill is not so bulky, but is more elongated, with the tips usually more sharply pointed, and often more crossed.

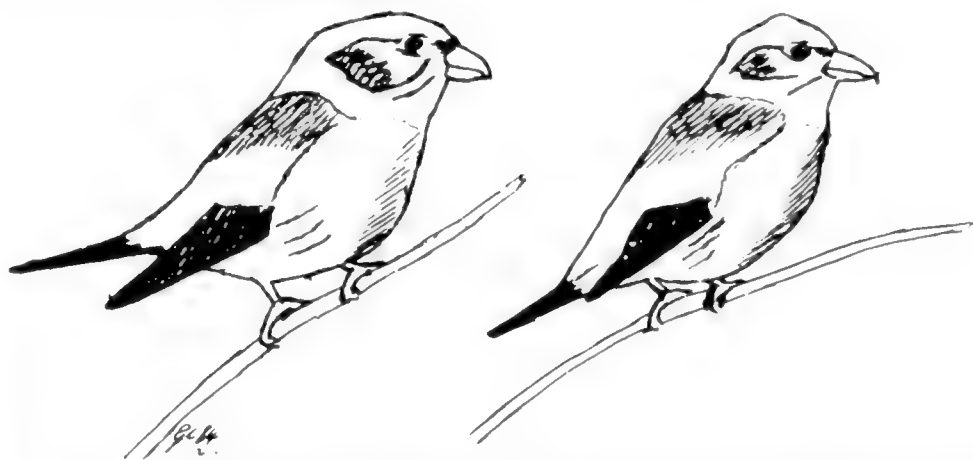


Fig. 10. Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (left) and Crossbill *L. curvirostra* (right) to show comparative jizz when perched (Graham P. Catley)

Photographs of Parrot Crossbills may show an exaggerated bill shape, presumably owing to foreshortening caused by telephoto lenses and the differing angle of the bill to the camera. Measurements taken from photographs tend to reduce the length to depth ratio of the bill. Thus, birds in the field may give the impression of having less striking bills than those in published photographs, a point mentioned by several observers in 1982/83. Another explanation for this anomaly is the distinct possibility that photographs only of Parrot Crossbills with really striking bills are published, since others may have been less confidently identified. A photograph of a female published in *British Birds* (71: plate 6) shows an individual with extreme bill proportions: observers tended to use this as a reference in 1982/83, but comparison of some birds with this individual may have led to a number of failures to identify Parrots.

Non-adult type All species of crossbills have uncrossed bills when they leave the nest. Juvenile Parrot Crossbills, therefore, take some time to develop a bill of full adult-type proportions. One trapped on Fair Isle, in autumn 1962, was well advanced in moult to first-winter plumage, but had a bill depth of only 11.5mm. It follows that in normal winter populations there will be Parrot Crossbills without the full massive bills of adults, and it seems to be these which create most identification headaches. They should, however, still be identifiable, using the structural characteristics noted above, and by voice. The bill has the same general shape as that of adults, although not the same proportions, and is thus still a useful feature.

CALLS

Parrot Crossbills have quite a varied vocabulary, but the most regularly heard call is a single repetitive note, variously transcribed as 'tsyiup', 'tschiup', 'tyup', 'jup', 'quip' or 'tiyup'. It is generally agreed to be similar to Crossbill's, but slightly deeper, coarser, more resonant, harsher or more metallic. When heard well, it is distinctive. An observer's appreciation of differences in call obviously depends on his or her experience of the varied vocabulary of Crossbill, and on hearing and ability to listen closely to call notes.

Another version of this call is a very deep 'tyooop'. This is sometimes given in flight and occasionally when perched, and is the most diagnostic call of all. It is also much deeper than the call of Scottish Crossbill, as well as of Crossbill. Parrots regularly give a further call, mostly when perched, transcribed as 'quop', 'gop', 'quap' or 'kop'. This note may be confused with the deeper calls of Crossbill.

Jonsson (1979) noted that, when in flocks, Parrots give calls of varying

232. Female Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*. Norfolk, March 1984 (Roger Tidman)





233. Male Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Derbyshire, January 1983 (Gary Palmer)

pitch. In 1982/83, several observers claimed to hear Crossbill calls from mixed Parrot Crossbill/Crossbill flocks, especially in flight; it would seem, however, that the flocks, although possibly mixed, may in fact have consisted purely of Parrots.

An additional complication is provided by juveniles. Those on Fair Isle in 1962 gave a call similar to that of adults, but slightly higher in pitch, and Davis (1963) suggested that this may be related to the development of the size of the bill/mouth area.

In 1982/83, those in large parties were noisier than those in small groups, with much squabbling, calling, and uttering of unusual noises. Several males were heard to give song and sub-song, when perched, from October right through to April.

Food and feeding habits

The regular food of Parrot Crossbills is given by Dementiev & Gladkov (1954) as the seeds of pine and other conifers and, very rarely, seeds of crowberry *Empetrum* and of bilberry *Vaccinium*. Those in Britain in 1982/83 had either found suitable coniferous feeding habitat or were migrants at coastal sites devoid of preferred food. The necessity for such migrants to locate a suitable food source quickly after an exhausting flight was shown

234 & 235. Male (left) and female (right) Parrot Crossbills *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Norfolk, December 1983 (Roger Tidman)





236 & 237. Male Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Humberside, October 1982 (Graham P. Catley)

by the weak condition of some on the East Coast. Two were searching for seeds on the ground, and one was feeding on thistles *Cirsium*; all three eventually died. Parrot Crossbills on Fair Isle in 1962, deprived of suitable food, fed on the seeds of thrift *Armeria*, oats *Avena* and thistles.

Individuals which had located suitable coniferous feeding habitat fed mostly on pine seeds, but also to an extent on seeds of larch *Larix*. The wintering flock in Derbyshire/South Yorkshire fed mostly on pine, occasionally on larch, but never on spruce. The two individuals at Humberston fed exclusively on seeds of Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*, and not on any of the introduced species of pine present. Birds in the coastal conifers in the Netherlands in 1982/83 showed a preference for seeds of Austrian pine *P. nigra nigra*, as opposed to those of Corsican pine *P. n. maritima*; in February and March, some were seen feeding on the leaf buds of poplars *Populus*.

The British Parrot Crossbills, while feeding in a particular tree, were very acrobatic in their search for cones. Once located, a cone was invariably snipped off at the stalk, carried in the bill to a stout branch, and held in one foot while being opened. Cones were occasionally carried in the bill in flight, but it was not ascertained if this was because they were being taken to a favourite perch or whether it was due to disturbance or to some other cause. The cones, once held by a foot, were prised open with the bill; green cones were dealt with as easily as ripe ones, and the seeds then extracted with the tongue, the scales being discarded before the seed was eaten. Cones were opened very methodically, in most cases all the seeds being extracted from each one and thus some time being spent on each, as opposed to the more haphazard behaviour of Crossbills. While feeding on a cone, the Parrots were usually very still and quiet and could be rather difficult to locate in the foliage except by the noise of falling scales and discarded cones.

Instances of breeding behaviour in Britain

Most irruptive species occasionally show signs of breeding behaviour in areas far removed from their normal breeding range following irruptions. Indeed, many migrant species demonstrate such behaviour in spring prior to departure from wintering areas. It has been suggested that breeding far outside the normal range may be an ecological adaptation designed (a) to colonise new areas, or (b) to act as a survival mechanism for highly



238. Juvenile Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, Suffolk, 1974 (Simon Cox)

irruptive species in times of food shortage in the normal breeding range. The Crossbill in particular has spasmodically colonised widespread areas outside its regular range, for varying lengths of time, following large irruptions. Breeding in these distant regions is also probably related to the availability, quantity and quality of a suitable food supply.

As both large influxes of Parrot Crossbills into Britain have been in late autumn, followed by wintering of parties which have remained through to early spring, it is perhaps not surprising that breeding behaviour by this species has been observed in Britain. Males have been heard in song from late autumn (October) onwards, in some instances not connected with territories (i.e. by coastal migrants). The 1962/63 influx was probably very poorly documented, but even so there were two possible instances of breeding behaviour. At Hartsholme Gravel-pits, Lincoln, there were up to ten individuals from January and a pair was present from late February to 25th May, the male being heard in song (Atkin 1964); limited observations could well have failed to detect a breeding attempt. Near Wisley, Surrey, a female Parrot Crossbill was trapped on 15th May 1963; in the same area, there was also a record of 'a nest built in a pine on April 23rd, by a pair of

239. Male and juvenile Parrot Crossbills *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Norfolk, April 1985 (Roger Tidman)



crossbills believed to have had abnormally large bills.' They were not, however, confirmed as Parrots, and the nest was not subsequently examined.

In 1982/83, following extensive wintering in South Yorkshire/Derbyshire, there were three records of pairs holding territories in March-May. Display and courtship-feeding were observed, and two pairs built nests. It is unclear whether any proven breeding took place. In spring 1984, following the wintering of seven individuals at Wells Wood, Norfolk, a pair nested and reared one young; the female later paired with another immature male and reared two young. This was the first confirmed breeding of Parrot Crossbills in Britain (we hope that full details will be published shortly).

Continuity of breeding outside the normal range by such spasmodically irruptive species is, however, unlikely without a good-sized nucleus population or regular influxes of new recruits, and it seems improbable that such small groups could sustain themselves for very long.

Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to this paper in its formative stages, and we wish to thank especially the following people for the assistance they gave us: M. J. Rogers, for help with all Rarities Committee data; Dr Alan Knox, Nick Dymond, Nick Riddiford, and the Identification Notes Panel of *British Birds*, for helpful comments on the identification section; Ian Dawson, for seeking out many papers and references; and Mike Earp, for invaluable assistance on the historical records. The following foreign correspondents supplied Scandinavian and other European records on request: Geoffrey Acklam, Dr Philippe Dubois, Gerald Oreel, Peter Prokop, Lennart Risberg, Hans Schekkerman, Dr Luc Schifferli, Lars Svensson and A. P. Møller. Additional assistance was received from John Dale, Giles Dunmore, Mike Everett, Mick Fiszer, Andrew Henderson, Ian Mills, Derek Moore, John O'Sullivan, John Sanderson and Colin Slater. Finally, our thanks go to all respondents to our appeal (*Brit. Birds* 76: 237); all the information received was much appreciated.

Summary

All past records of Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* in Britain are summarised, with particular reference to the major influxes of 1962/63 and 1982/83. The latter influx is analysed in detail, and comparisons are drawn with the simultaneous occurrence of the species in the rest of northern Europe. The general pattern of occurrence in Britain, with a late autumn arrival and subsequent wintering parties, is discussed. Notes are presented on the species' identification, feeding, and breeding behaviour outside the normal breeding range. Parrot Crossbills were confirmed to have bred for the first time in Britain in 1984.

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Mystery photographs

106 The sturdy wader in plates 209 & 240 readily proclaims its identity to us, even though its bill, the most consistently useful character among waders, is almost entirely concealed. The heavy body is supported by pale, thick legs that are noticeably short above the 'knee'. The bill, also pale, is stout at the base and tapers so little that we know it must be much longer than the head. These proportions point directly to a bird the shape of a snipe *Gallinago*, but the simple head pattern and lack of striping on the upperparts eliminate all the snipes. The solid dark crown and lores, the well-defined whitish supercilium, the complex patterning of the scapulars, coverts and tertials, the suggestion of a white rump, and the barring on the tail all define a dowitcher *Limnodromus*. But which one?

In identifying dowitchers, the first step always is to decide what plumage the bird is in. This one obviously lacks the bold black spots and bars on the breast and sides that both New World species have in summer plumage. The elaborate patterning of the upperparts in combination with the grey breast and soft grey speckling on the sides leaves the age of the bird in no doubt: only a juvenile is so strikingly marked above and so dully marked

below. (In winter plumage, the underparts show the same pattern, but the upperparts are plain grey.)

Once that decision is made, the rest is easy. One has only to look at the tertials. Juvenile Long-billed Dowitchers *L. scolopaceus* have tertials with plain centres (occasionally marked by two small spots just forward of the tip) and narrow pale fringes. Juvenile Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus* all have tertials with bright, easy-to-see internal markings: either bars, loops, or stripes that parallel the pale edges. We can see at a glance that the bird in the photograph is a Short-billed Dowitcher. Other features support that diagnosis. The markings on the lower scapulars and the greater coverts echo the tertial pattern, as they do on both species. (While the scapulars on some Long-billed may be marked with a pale chevron half-way down the feather, this feature is usually concealed by the tip of the overlying feather.) The barring on the tail shows white bars broader than the dark ones, a pattern restricted to Short-billed Dowitcher. The grey on the breast does not extend so far down as on Long-billed, and the speckling on the sides tends to be better defined.

Although a colour photo would have shown the bright rufous markings on the upperparts and the rich orange wash on the underparts (in contrast to the deep chestnut markings and duller, buffier wash on a juvenile Long-billed), this information would only have been icing on the cake. In any case, the colours may fade to buff on both species later in the season. What would have been useful is knowledge of the date and location of the photo. This one was taken in California in August 1979, by Larry Sansone.

240. Juvenile Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*, USA, August 1979 (Larry Sansone)



Short-billed juveniles are seen throughout North America in August; Long-billed juveniles cannot be expected even in the Pacific Northwest (British Columbia, Washington and Idaho) until the middle of August and they are rarely seen in the rest of the United States and Canada before mid September.

CLAUDIA WILDS



241. Mystery photograph 107. Identify the species. Answer next month.

Notes

Feeding behaviour and voice of Cory's Shearwater at sea

On 18th August 1982, on board the Cypriot ferry *Sol Phryne* nearing Piraeus, Greece, I spent several hours trying to photograph a group of up to 70 Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea* following the boat. The majority spent most of the time flying at up to 10m above the water, in the wake of the ferry, rather like Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*. Every now and again, small fish 8-10cm long were brought near to the surface by the propellers. The shearwaters would dive down and crash into the water, usually submerging the front half of their bodies, but never



submerging completely; in most cases, a fish was caught and quickly swallowed. *BWP* mentions that Cory's Shearwaters follow fishing boats; no fishing vessels were noted on my two-day ferry ride, but shearwaters followed all other motorised vessels, including merchant ships, cruisers and a yacht, presumably waiting to prey on stunned fish caught up in the propellers. *BWP* also states that Cory's Shearwaters are silent at sea, but I heard several birds calling when no other species was present: a single, disyllabic call rendered as 'bee-oh', similar to but quieter and higher-pitched than Herring Gull's.

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Pallid Swift in Hampshire At about 16.45 GMT on 20th May 1983, I went to Farlington Marsh, Hampshire, as I had done daily for the previous month. As I approached the lake, I noticed a flock of 100-200 Swifts *Apus apus* hawking, and checked through them. Almost immediately, a pale swift came into view and I hurried closer. At the edge of the lake, from the sea wall, it was possible to see the bird from both above and below, with ideal light coming from behind me. It was a Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*, a bird with which I was familiar both from abroad (most recently Israel, just over a month previously) and in Britain (Stodmarsh, Kent, in 1978).

I noted the following description:

BUILD AND FLIGHT Perhaps slightly longer-winged than accompanying Swifts. Occasionally glided briefly, with slightly bowed wings. Tail notch shallower than that of Swift. Jizz different and distinctive, but hard to define.

PLUMAGE General colour sandy-brown, similar to Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*, but a

shade buffer; much paler than Swift. Head marked by dark brow over eye and distinctive silky throat-patch (more evident than on Stodmarsh Pallid Swift), though paler forehead not noticed. Wings pale, but offset by contrasting, relatively darker primary and body feathers. Upperwing- and underwing-coverts distinctly 'scalloped', as were flanks.

I watched the bird for about 15 minutes and then bolted for the phone box; but no-one whom I called was in. When I returned, most of the swifts, including the Pallid, were gone, the latter not to be seen again.

This was the second record of Pallid Swift in Britain and Ireland, the first being that at Stodmarsh, Kent, during 13th-21st May 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 170-175).

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Dunnock eating from Blackbird faeces On 7th February 1980, in the garden where I then lived at Oadby, Leicester, I saw a Dunnock *Prunella modularis* pecking at a faecal dropping of a Blackbird *Turdus merula* and extracting small items (presumably seeds) embedded in it. I suspect that this habit is not uncommon, as Dunnocks will accompany feeding Blackbirds at times. Although not mentioned in *The Handbook*, this association was noted by Edmund Selous (1927, *Realities of Bird Life*).

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Field characters of female and first-winter male Siberian Thrush The distinctive plumage of adult male Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* has been well described elsewhere (e.g. Andrew *et al.* 1954; Kent 1979), but little information has been published on the identification of females and first-winter males. Whilst in Malaysia in January 1983, I compiled the following notes on these plumages, with reference to study skins.

Juveniles undergo a partial moult (of body feathers and some wing-coverts) before migration. Males then attain a 'grey' first-winter plumage, and, whilst they may breed in their first spring, full 'black' summer plumage is not acquired until after the next moult, which is a complete one during August of their second calendar year (Dementiev & Gladkov 1954). It seems that first-winter female plumage is probably indistinguishable in the field from that of adult females: Svensson (1984) describes females as 'difficult to age reliably'.

Females have brown upperparts, spotted underparts and a prominent supercilium and hence superficially resemble west Palearctic thrushes (e.g. Redwing *Turdus iliacus*). A number of characters, however, distinguish Siberian Thrush from this and other 'spot-breasted' thrushes. The upper breast is closely marked with broken bands of small, dark dots. On the lower breast and flanks, these are broader and slightly concave. In fresh plumage, the feather fringes range from pale ochre to pale brown, forming a triangular or 'shield-shaped' centre to these feathers. This creates a breast pattern of white spots and dark crescents with a pale ochre/brown background (cf. Mistle Thrush *T. viscivorus* and Song Thrush *T. philomelos*, which respectively have circular and oval black tips to white or pale feathers). The belly and undertail-coverts are near-white, with bands of brown crescents across the latter. The patterning of the underparts is reminiscent of White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, but lacks the definition and contrast of that species. The upperparts are similar in colour to those of Redwing, but the primaries, secondaries and tail feathers are distinctly warm brown. In addition, the females I observed during January showed two pale wing bars, the one formed by cream tips to the greater coverts being more distinct than that on the median coverts. The head pattern of females is somewhat complicated: a thick, pale ochre supercilium contrasts with a rich brown crown and duller ear-coverts. The ear-coverts are flecked with white; anteriorly, these are broader, and merge to form a diffuse white 'spot'. A white submoustachial stripe is finely scaled with dark brown, and bordered below by a brown malar stripe which runs into the spotting of the breast. The centre of the throat is more or less clear white.

Males in first-winter plumage show characters of both males and females, and considerable variation. The body plumage is grey (unlike the slaty-black of adult males), and this pales to white on the belly. The grey rear flanks are spotted with white, as are the undertail-coverts. Like adult males, they show a broad white supercilium, but retain the brown primaries, secondaries, tail feathers and some wing-coverts from juvenile plumage and, like females, exhibit buff to whitish wing bars. On one specimen, the ear-coverts and malar stripe were brown (as on females), but the throat was grey, as on more typical first-winter males. Similarly, an undated male in the collection of the Merseyside County Museum exhibits a brown crown and a patch of 'female plumage' (presumably retained juvenile feathers) in the centre of an otherwise grey breast: this individual may not yet have completed the post-juvenile moult.

The white band along the underwing is present irrespective of age. All the individuals that I saw showed yellow/orange legs. In addition, Hollom (1960) described the call of Siberian Thrush as a 'short "zit" similar to, but a little softer than that of Song Thrush'; Tony Baker (verbally) and I independently noted this as being harder. In their account of a male trapped on the Isle of May, Andrew *et al.* (1954) noted 'the top of the skull was noticeably flat and lacking in forehead'. I feel this character warrants reiteration as it was very apparent on all the individuals that I observed and, in combination with a stout, longish bill, created an almost 'wedge-shaped' outline to the head.

I wish to thank Dr M. Largen of the Merseyside County Museum and Dr

M. Hounsome of the Manchester Museum for access to skins, and Tony Baker for his comments on earlier drafts of this note. **PAUL R. JEPSON**
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242. Male Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica*, USSR, June 1984 (*Nigel Redman*)

Yellow legs of Siberian Thrush The most striking features of my first Siberian Thrushes *Zoothera sibirica* (on Doi Inthanon, Thailand, on 28th February 1985), apart from the males' typical dark slate-coloured plumage and prominent white supercilia, were the very obvious, long, apparently thick, pale yellow legs. These were so conspicuous that I was surprised that I had not heard of them as an identification feature. A subsequent check of the literature revealed little mention (apart from the occasional 'pale legs'), although P. W. Kent did note 'yellowy-white' legs 'longer than those of Redwing [*Turdus iliacus*]' as a feature of the second British individual, in Hampshire in 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 121-122). Observers who knew the species from Siberia seemed almost invariably to have seen it singing from treetops, where the legs were not seen or were not prominent. It seemed amazing that such a striking feature should not be well documented in print. When this note was in draft, however, Paul K. Jepson's note (above) came to hand, confirming the characteristic seen on my birds in Thailand.

I have also examined the 139 specimens of Siberian Thrush in the collection at the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, Hertfordshire. The labels of only 18 of those 139 include a note of the leg colour of the fresh specimen.

The legs of 12 males were described as brown (2), brownish, brownish-yellow, yellowish-brown, yellowish-brown with back of tarsus pale yellow, ochreous, yellow-ochre tinged brown, greenish yellow with back of tarsus dirty yellow (2), dull yellow, and yellow. The legs of six females were described as brownish yellow, yellowish brown, yellow tinged with pale brown, orange yellow, and yellow (2).

These reveal considerable variation, but do confirm the generally yellowish colour of the legs of this species.

The behaviour of the Thai individuals was also unexpected. They were with a large flock of Eye-browed Thrushes *Turdus obscurus* in treetops, but kept separate, and several times ran with a horizontal carriage along horizontal branches, making them look like large, dark, long-legged pipits *Anthus*. They were very shy.

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Cannibalism by Blackbird In the early afternoon of 20th February 1981, in Brockworth, Gloucester, a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* was killed when it flew into a wire fence in the garden of a factory. The corpse was thrown on to a lawn, where it was found almost at once by a female Blackbird, which first approached it cautiously and displayed towards it briefly in a disturbed way. Within less than 15 minutes, these displays ceased, and the female moved to the body and began a series of pecks at the outstretched wings of the corpse. Over a two-hour period, these initially tentative attacks developed until the female stood on the body, pecking hard at the breast and head. When this produced movements of the dead bird's wings, the female retreated a short distance and displayed aggressively at the body, drooping her wings, spreading her tail and crouching. On most occasions she returned to the attack within 30-40 seconds, although on at least two she fled to a nearby bush for some minutes. At dusk, I examined the dead male: some feathers were missing from the head and nape, and the breast was largely plucked bare.

I checked again at 07.50 GMT on 21st, when there was no further damage, although the female was near the body. During the morning, the female renewed her attacks, and these soon developed into prolonged bouts of ferocious pecking, during which she was clearly no longer intimidated by random movements of the body. In the course of the day, I checked frequently; the female appeared to be continuously present at the corpse, spending minutes at a time standing on or alongside it, attacking and apparently feeding off it. By 16.15 hours, the entire top of the skull down to the line of the bill was missing; the eyes and the brain had been eaten; the breast, belly, head remains, neck and part of the back had been completely plucked; and most of the flesh from the breast had been eaten, as had parts of the upper back.

The corpse vanished overnight on 21st/22nd, but, after the initial displays of aggression on 20th, the female had fed on the dead male's corpse for

the whole of 21st. I know of no accounts of such sustained cannibalism by a Blackbird, although Joan Hall-Craggs (*Brit. Birds* 70: 300) recorded behaviour similar to the initial aggression.

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Second female Blackbird rearing brood of dead female On the morning of 8th July 1982, near Ashford, Kent, the female of a pair of Blackbirds *Turdus merula* having their third brood in a firethorn *Pyracantha* outside our back door flew into the house, collided with a window and was killed. At the time, the male was sitting on four eggs; he continued to sit for what appeared to be his 'normal' periods for the rest of the day and on 9th and 10th, apparently not putting in any extra time on the nest to make up for the absence of his mate. On 11th, a new female appeared at the nest and started to brood; in the afternoon, the eggs hatched. Things then proceeded normally, with the male and female both feeding the young.

It occurred to us that it could have been a female unconnected with our nest that had killed herself. This is, however, unlikely. Not only was no female seen at the nest on the afternoon of 8th or on 9th-10th, but the temperament of the two females was quite different: the first was very shy, leaving the nest every time we used the back door; the second stayed on the nest even when watched from 60cm.

JIM HUMPHREYS

Gate House, Little Chart, Ashford, Kent TN27 0PT

Several points of interest arise here: (1) it is not usual for male Blackbirds to incubate, although they sometimes do and the BTO's Nest Records Scheme in fact has an appreciable number of such records; (2) despite the male not incubating at times when the female would have been, the eggs hatched (in warm weather this is not unlikely, but a considerable protraction of the incubation period would be expected); and (3) that a 'new' female arrived and began to incubate the near-hatching eggs is an unlikely event, though not impossible, and is highly intriguing. Eds

Blackbird eating fox faeces The notes on Magpies *Pica pica* and Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* eating dog faeces (*Brit. Birds* 76: 411) prompt me to record the following. On 29th August 1983, on a grassy track near West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, I saw a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* examining and pecking at a typical fresh stool of a fox *Vulpes vulpes*; eventually, it swallowed a small portion before flying off. On inspecting the faecal specimen, I found that it contained fur, bone pieces and a few beetle elytra. I have seen similar behaviour by a female Blackbird (*Brit. Birds* 59: 249), although, on that occasion, the stool was stale and whitish in colour.

A. P. RADFORD

Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

Jackdaws eating dog faeces Regarding birds feeding on dog faeces (*Brit. Birds* 76: 411), on three separate occasions in early August 1983, at Newlyn, Cornwall, I watched a Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* feeding on fresh dog faeces. For periods of up to ten minutes, it methodically picked over the material and appeared to extract edible items, which it swallowed. I was not able to ascertain if the same bird was involved each time. That birds often feed on

faeces is well known (see *Brit. Birds* 75: 88). On 8th April 1981, in Florida, USA, I watched an American Coot *Fulica americana* feeding on the hard droppings of tame Muscovy Ducks *Cairina moschata*, followed by an immature Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* which obtained earthworms revealed by the displacement of the material (*Florida Field Nat.* 10, 4: 80).

BERNARD KING

Gull Cry, 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall

Rooks feeding on human vomit On 2nd February 1983, in Harrogate, North Yorkshire, I saw three Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* feeding on human vomit which was frozen to the pavement. On my approach they flew to some nearby trees, but soon returned to continue feeding. Considerable effort was required by the Rooks to remove the frozen pieces of solid material. I can find no record of this habit in either *The Handbook or Crows of the World* (1976, D. Goodwin).

M. F. BROWN

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Derek Goodwin has commented as follows: 'I have not seen this, but in London, and doubtless elsewhere, Feral Pigeons *Columba livia* often take *undigested* cooked rice, masticated chips and other more or less "usual" foods from human vomit; usually they are less keen the more it is soiled by or still mixed in its liquid medium.' Eds

Birds eating dog faeces Regarding the notes on birds eating dog faeces (*Brit. Birds* 76: 411), I have seen this behaviour many times over the last four or five years, and not only in hard weather. The species most frequently involved are Magpie *Pica pica*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* and Blackbird *Turdus merula*, with occasional Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* and Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus*. As Dr C. H. Fry commented (76: 411), the birds seem largely attracted by undigested cereal in the faeces. I have also seen Magpies turning over sheep dung, presumably in search of insects.

JOHN BARNES

Fach Goch, Waenfawr, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 4YS

Derek Goodwin has also commented as follows: 'Some distinction should be drawn between the eating of faeces *per se* and the picking out of undigested bits of grain or other food present in faeces. When/where grain-fed horses are/were kept, this behaviour was constantly performed by House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* and Feral Pigeons *Columba livia* in towns. It should not, I think, be thought of as coprophagy, any more than the picking of grain or other food from earth or mud (probably with some accidental ingestion of adhering substrate) should be thought of as "earth-eating" or "mud-eating".' Eds

Starlings eating snowy wax caps At 09.00 GMT on 29th October 1982, near Canterbury Cathedral, Kent, I saw two of a flock of ten Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* that were feeding on a lawn approach a group of snowy wax caps *Hygrocybe nivea*. They pulled off and swallowed several portions of the caps. Inspection of the fungi after the birds had flown off showed no evidence of invertebrate infestation. Snowy wax caps are small, white cap fungi which grow on grassland in autumn; they are edible for man and are common.

I have previously noted a Starling eating Jew's-ear fungus *Auricularia auricularia* (*Brit. Birds* 76: 580).

A. P. RADFORD

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Dr C. J. Feare has commented that he knows of no other records of Starlings eating fungi.
EDS

Red-eyed Vireo catching great green bush cricket On 5th October 1981, an immature Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* at the Garrison, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, emerged from thick cover with a male great green bush cricket *Tettigonia viridissima* in its bill. The vireo then returned behind cover, and, when it came out, some five to ten seconds later, the cricket had gone, presumably having been eaten.

The only reference I have found to Red-eyed Vireo eating orthoptera is in A. C. Bent's *Life Histories of North American Wagtails, Shrikes, Vireos and their Allies* (1965), which states that a captive juvenile ate 25 grasshoppers and a young locust, amongst a total of over 100 various insects, in 24 hours. John Farrand, Jr, editor of *American Birds*, has commented (*in litt.*): 'I too have searched the literature for references to Red-eyed Vireos eating orthopterans, but can find only the Bent citation you note. But given the great array of insects that this species is known to consume, it would not surprise me to learn that Red-eyed Vireos are quietly consuming immature bush-crickets, katydids, and other members of the Order Orthoptera that are not arboreal. For a vireo to take on an insect the size of an adult *Tettigonia* is quite out of the ordinary, I suspect.'

B. J. BROWN

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Letters

Distinction between Mandarin and Wood Duck in female-type plumages A comprehensive description of differences between Mandarin *Aix galericulata* and Wood Duck *A. sponsa* was given by C. Holt (*Brit. Birds* 77: 227-232). As he noted, however, some of the characteristics vary sufficiently to result sometimes in identification confusion. An additional feature, to which my attention was drawn decades ago by Otto Kleinschmidt, has helped me ever since in making a safe distinction between these two duck species, albeit only in favourable light conditions.

Holt noted that 'Female-type Mandarins are paler and greyer than Wood Ducks . . .'. That is correct. And, concerning Wood Duck, 'Female-type Wood Ducks are coarser-looking, with darker, glossier plumages.' There, the amendment might be made that the upperparts of the female

Mandarin are somewhat dull and lack-lustre, while the upperparts of Wood Duck are in all cases conspicuous for a violet or, sometimes, greenish gloss. This point was clearly made by Sir Peter Scott in his *A Coloured Key to the Wildfowl of the World* (1957) and in Delacour's *The Waterfowl of the World* (1959), with the colour difference even more clearly described in the German edition of the former publication (edited by H.-G. Klös). Thus, these are not new findings, but do add to Holt's comparisons.

HEINRICH DATHE

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Black-headed Yellow Wagtails in western Europe When, in 1976, I submitted a letter to this journal seriously questioning whether the black-headed race *feldegg* of the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* had ever occurred in Britain—there were at the time ten accepted records—I drew attention to H. Gätke's summary in *Heligoland* (1895, pages 339-340) of his experience of black-headed Yellow Wagtails obtained during no fewer than 50 spring migrations through the island.

The letter was rejected. It was indeed courteously and painstakingly rejected, in a long reply, pointing out *inter alia* that Yellow Wagtail classification was not fully developed in Gätke's day (which is true) and assuring me that, whatever Gätke might have written, *feldegg* was a quite unmistakable and distinctive subspecies, so that all ten British records could only be regarded as having impeccable credentials.

While we must be grateful for the recent paper by van den Berg & Oreel (*Brit. Birds* 78: 176-183), which considerably amplified Gätke's comments on plumages and confirmed the essential correctness of all that he wrote on the topic, we cannot be other than staggered by the complete turnaround within nine years, and by the fact that Gätke, who 'smelled the original rat' over a century ago, is not even mentioned once in this paper. A reading of the relevant pages in *Heligoland* would, I submit, have left no serious ornithological student in any doubt that black-headed individuals do occur in the 'grey-headed' subspecies *thunbergi*; particularly after 1920 when the passerine volume of Witherby's *Practical Handbook* was published, Gätke encountered many in the migration period of *thunbergi* ('with every gradation of head colouring, from a dark blue slate grey to a pure brilliant black').

How have van den Berg & Oreel, and their correspondent Dr Lasse Sammalisto, even in his own earlier paper (*Brit. Birds* 54: 54-69), felt able to ignore this pioneering, stimulating and rightly famous work? Did they too feel that it is today only of a certain quaint, somewhat dubious, antiquarian interest? And, now, is the truth of what Gätke wrote and surmised only *grudgingly* to be acknowledged by these authors and the *British Birds* editorial board?

L. J. DAVENPORT

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This is not the only instance where one generation 'discovers' something already established by an earlier generation. Gätke's opinions have not always proved to be correct, but we are not grudging in our acknowledgment of his pioneer work. EDS

The Black Woodpecker as a British bird M. Cuisin's statement that the recent expansion of the range of the Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* in Western Europe now makes its genuine occurrence in Britain possible (*Brit. Birds* 77: 186) removes one of the traditional arguments for rejecting all 82 of the records I collected and published in 1959 (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 79: 79-87, 102-113). Many of these records are too insubstantial for acceptance anyway, but in my paper I submitted seven records which I considered worthy of reconsideration: specimens in Dorset in 1799, Wiltshire prior to 1887 and Yorkshire in 1897, and sight records in Breconshire in 1903, Nottinghamshire in 1907, Cheshire in 1936 and Hertfordshire in 1944.

I do not wish to repeat the arguments that I put forward in 1959, but would draw attention to some remarkable circumstances. One is that the publication of my paper seems to have brought to a complete halt any further observations in a series that had extended over nearly 200 years. I have received no records of the Black Woodpecker being seen in the British Isles since 1959, which is extremely odd in view both of what has been happening in Europe and of the great increase in the number of bird-watchers in that period. It would be interesting to know if any have been seen, but not reported because of the determined stand the ornithological establishment has taken against this bird as a naturally occurring British species ever since Gurney's analysis in 1871.

On the other hand, there is still no evidence of the existence of fully melanic Green Woodpeckers *Picus viridis*, which have so often been predicated as explaining former sight records. Nor has any evidence emerged of Black Woodpeckers being released, except in the limited period 1895-97, which has been another major argument against acceptance of any of the numerous records of this species in Britain.

In fact, the status of the Black Woodpecker as a British bird remains as obscure as ever.

R. S. R. FITTER

Drifts, Chinnor Hill, Oxford OX9 4BS

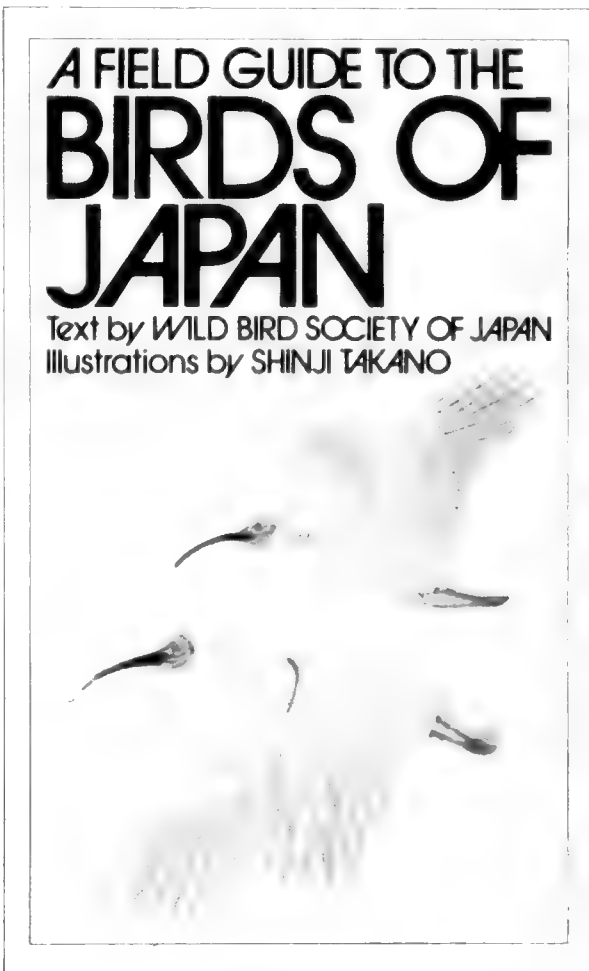
Announcements

Meeting of Working Group on Granivorous Birds—INTECOL A general meeting of the Group will take place on 13th August 1986, in the course of the IV International Congress of Ecology, which will be held at Syracuse, New York, USA, during 10th-16th August 1986. Further information will be supplied by the chairman of the Working Group: Professor Dr Jan Pinowski, Department of Vertebrate Ecology, Institute of Ecology PAS, Dziekanów Leśny, 05-092 Lomianki, Poland.

'A Dictionary of Birds'—BEST BIRD BOOK OF 1985 Although not included in the British BirdShop list, *British Birds* readers can nevertheless obtain this book by writing in the title in the space headed 'WRITE-IN ORDERS' on the form on page xiii.

'The Frontiers of Bird Identification'—SPECIAL OFFER This *British Birds* guide to the identification of some difficult species, based on expert papers in *British Birds*, is still available at a special reduced price to 'BB' readers. The usual price is £9.95, but 'BB' subscribers can obtain it for £7.95. Please use the British BirdShop order form on page xiii.

'A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan'—SPECIAL OFFER We are delighted to announce that this excellent field guide (see Review by Rodney P. Martins in October 1983, *Brit. Birds* 76: 472-473) is now obtainable at a special reduced price, exclusive to 'BB' subscribers (and to members of the Oriental Bird Club). The standard price is £16.00, but 'BB' subscribers can now obtain it for £13.50 (post free to UK & Irish addresses). Please use the British BirdShop form on page xiii.



New books in British BirdShop As well as *The Frontiers of Bird Identification* and *A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan* (see above), we can now offer the following books to 'BB' readers (post free to UK & Irish addresses):

- Birds of New Guinea* by Bechler, Pratt & Zimmerman (Princeton University Press)
- A Guide to the Birds of Colombia* by Hilty, Brown & Tudor (Princeton University Press)
- Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa* by Maclean, Newman & Lockwood (John Voelcker)
- Newman's Guide to the Birds of Southern Africa* by Newman (Macmillan)
- The Encyclopaedia of Birds* by Perrins & Middleton (Allen & Unwin)
- Nature Photography Yearbook 1985/86* by Pölking (NHBS)
- British Warblers* by Simms (Collins, New Naturalist)

Please use the order form on page xiii.

Seventy-five years ago...

'FOOD OF THE COMMON HERON. In a note on this subject (*antea*, p. 85), Dr. C. B. Ticehurst states that he found several shrimps turned quite pink by the digestive process in the stomach of a Heron about a week old.' (*Brit. Birds* 4: 153, October 1910)

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

White-tailed Eagle news At long last, the first young White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* to be produced by the reintroduced birds has flown. This happy event brought not just pleasure, but also a sense of profound relief to the Sea Eagle Project team as the reintroduction project entered its tenth year. Eggs were laid in both 1983 and 1984, but none hatched; in 1985, eggs were laid in no fewer than four nests: there was no hatch in two, but chicks were hatched in the others. One family came to grief very early on, almost certainly as a result of foul weather, but in the other nest a single eaglet made it. Thanks to generous financial support from the Eagle Star Group, the RSPB was able to provide around-the-clock wardening at this site. Meanwhile, the Nature Conservancy Council took delivery of the final batch of birds brought in under licence from Norway, for release at the Rhum NNR this summer.

When to tick? Mention of this successful breeding reminds us of several conversations we have heard during the last few years, the general drift of which has been 'At what point can we tick White-tailed Eagle for our lists?'. Views have varied from ultra-purist ideas about *never* doing so, to those which simply echo the quite widely held attitude of 'Who cares anyway?', with all manner of complicated suggestions in between. So what is the general consensus of opinion here? And, while we are on the subject, what rules do people follow for what can and can't be ticked? If anybody can be bothered to write to us, we will consider a short review.

Lamb problems Still on the subject of eagles, we were pleased to see that the Nature Conservancy Council refused to grant a licence for the killing of a Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* in Glenelg, despite much pressure and a lot of rather one-sided media publicity. One bird—it has not been possible even to say which one—was alleged to have killed quite staggering numbers of lambs (in some versions of the story, more than a pair with young could possibly have needed for food even if they were killing nothing else). This particular case does, however, require

further investigation, since there is evidence of high lamb mortality in the area and also evidence that eagles are killing *some* lambs, so NCC have acted sensibly in proposing to look into the whole business much more fully next year. Golden Eagles do kill lambs, of course, but usually rarely and in very small numbers; most lambs featuring in their diet are taken as carrion. Perhaps the saddest aspect of all this is the readiness with which some people use Golden Eagles (and for that matter also the fox *Vulpes vulpes*, the Raven *Corvus corax* and the Carrion Crow *C. corone*) as convenient scapegoats for poor lambing returns, when, in reality, so many other factors are involved.

Condor news Various incomplete reports are filtering through concerning the present status of the California Condor *Gymnogyps californianus*: it now looks as if the wild population is reduced to only 11 birds. We will endeavour to find out more and report on this in due course.

Eric Morecambe Appeal Like a surprisingly large number of stars in the entertainment world, Eric Morecambe turned to birds for relaxation. The RSPB Appeal launched in his memory (full details from RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL) seeks to raise at least £1.5 million for conservation purposes, most notably towards the costs of its new reserves at the Old Hall Marshes, Essex, and Islay in the Inner Hebrides.



'BB' badges Badge-toting birders can now obtain a free 'BB' badge merely by sending a stamped addressed envelope to Free badge offer, c/o P. J. Grant, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD.

The French connection British birders, perhaps especially those who frequent Scilly, will like to know that Le Parc Naturel Régional d'Armorique has just published the first volume (65-page, A4, duplicated) of *Bulletin du Centre Ornithologique d'Ouessant*, covering 1984 observations on Ushant. The price is F30 + postage (about £3.00) and the address to write to if you are interested is Parc Naturel Régional d'Armorique, Balaneg Huella, Saint-Eloy, 29224 Daoulas, France.

EEC Sites designated Environment Minister William Waldegrave chose the occasion of the RSPB's launch of its Eric Morecambe Memorial Appeal to announce that the Government is designating eight new Special Protection Areas under the 1979 European Community's Birds Directive. These are the Dee (Northwest England), the Swale (Kent), Chesil Beach and The Fleet (Dorset), Derwent Ings (Yorkshire/Humberside), Holburn Moss, Coquet Island and the Farnes (all Northumberland) and Chew Valley Lake (Avon). The first five, plus Irthinghead Mires (Cumbria/Northumberland), have also been designated as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

To all who go birding With this heading to his memorandum, Dr David Parkin has sent us this quotation: '... anticipate the morning dawn, and never think for an instant about the difficulties of ransacking the woods, the shores or the barren grounds, nor be vexed when you have traversed a few hundred miles of country without a single new species ...' (J.J. Audubon, 1831).



NHBS badge Badge-toting birders can obtain a free Natural History Book Service badge by sending a stamped addressed envelope to Bernard Mercer, NHBS, 62 Tritton Road, London SE21 8DE.

Spring at Point Pelee Perhaps the weakness of the Pound sterling was responsible for the low number of British birdwatchers who made the trip to Point Pelee this year: fewer than ten enthusiasts were known to be there for the peak period this year, although others did call in for one or two days. A period of hot weather from late April into May encouraged many birds to pass through the area quickly and there was none of the heavy falls for which the area is famous; advanced leaf growth also made observation a little more difficult. Nevertheless, all the expected species were recorded, including a few over-shoots such as Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*; generating almost as much interest were a Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* and an immature Little Gull *Larus minutus*. To celebrate the centenary of the Canadian National Park, a gold badge had been produced and was awarded to those recording over 100 species in one day around Pelee; naturally, the British contingent knocked off this total, so keep an eye open for these rare and coveted badges next time a Nearctic rarity turns up! (Contributed by Tony Armstrong)

Pett Pools Having already mentioned the Pett Pools Project (*Brit. Birds* 77: 574), we are pleased to include the following note from John Trowell of the Sussex Ornithological Society: 'In 1985 SOS will again lead local naturalists in the work of providing a muddy-margined pool at this East Sussex site a few miles west of Rye ... The costs of the operation run to several hundred pounds and are met by donations and sales of a Report [which should be available by the time this appears in print]: those wishing to support the project may send donations to, or buy a report (£1 including postage) from Robin Harris, 16 Fearon Road, Hastings, East Sussex. Cheques should be made payable to The Sussex Ornithological Society.'

New Norfolk guide Even though most of Norfolk's 'hotspots' are pretty well known to most of us, there is always that one place where you don't quite know exactly where to go, or what access arrangements are. Steve Gantlett has plugged the gap admirably by producing a comprehensive and attractive little booklet, *Where to Watch Birds in Norfolk*, which we believe to be the first comprehensive thing of its kind for the county. It is available from him for £2.50 (post free) from 18 Old Woman's Lane, Cley-next-the-Sea, Holt, Norfolk NR25 7TY.

Recent reports



Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

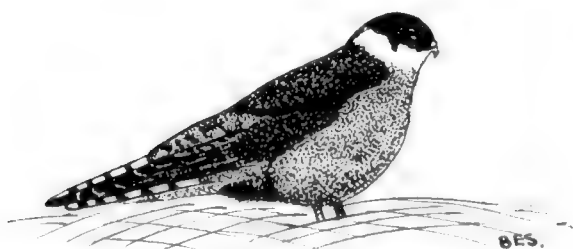
The dates in the report refer to July unless otherwise stated.

A brief spell of hot, continental weather, with air arriving from the southeast, lasted until 5th, when the cooler, unsettled, westerly weather experienced throughout most of June returned. Apart from a few days when

anticyclones to the south and west pushed warmer air in from the Continent, temperatures remained below average. Early movements of **Swifts** *Apus apus* on the English east coast, with 15,000 estimated passing Spurn (Humberside) on 11th and 500 at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 15th, suggest that many pairs did not breed, faced with a shortage of flying insects.

Early wader records

The rather frequent rain kept most reservoir levels high, with a consequent reduction of wader feeding areas. The English east coast reserves, however, while not attracting large numbers of migrants, notched up an impressive list of rarities. Nearctic species included



a **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* found at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 4th and remaining in that area into August, a summer-plumaged **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* at Titchwell (Norfolk) on 31st, a **Lesser Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* at Elmley (Kent) on 6th, and the usual sprinkling of **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* from Cley (Norfolk) on 4th, Peterborough (Cambridgeshire) on 20th, Minsmere on 30th-31st, near Spurn from 21st to 27th, and Dungeness (Kent) on 29th and 30th. Birds from easterly origins were another **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus*, this time from Cley on 4th, more **Marsh Sandpipers** *Tringa stagnatilis*, with one at Hauxley (Northumberland) on 13th, subsequently moving to Cresswell Pond (Northumberland) until 15th, and another near Maldon (Essex) on 24th, a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* at Elmley (Kent) on 27th and 28th, a **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* at Minsmere on 5th, and a **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* found at Cley on 30th and staying into August. **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* visited Rutland Water (Leicestershire) on 14th and the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) on 31st, and an early **Grey Phalarope** *P. fulicarius* was seen at Malin Head (Co. Donegal) on 21st. **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii* were noted at Teesmouth (Cleveland) on 13th, at Cley, and at Minsmere on 26th. Of the commoner migrants, **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* were frequently seen and heard in small parties crossing inland, never staying long.

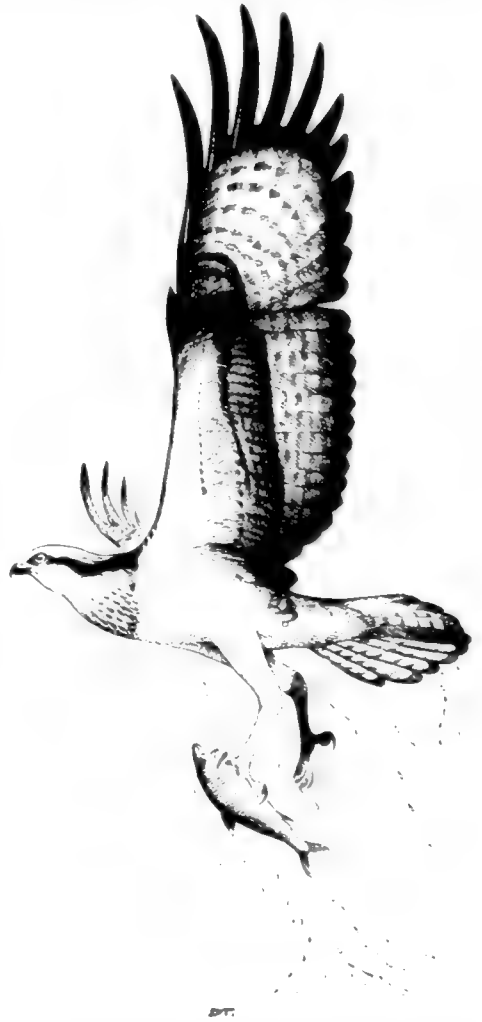
Marsh birds

A **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* returned to Havergate (Suffolk) during the last week of July, and another toured the Isle of Man between 3rd and 7th. Another summer record of **Great White Egret** *E. alba* came from Horsey (Norfolk) on 11th and 13th, with subsequent sightings on Halvergate Marsh (Norfolk), and an additional report of **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*, once a 'common' vagrant, came from Tonbridge (Kent) during 25th-31st (plate 244). A few **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* remained at Titchwell, Cley and Minsmere, and another was reported from Broad Lough (Co. Wicklow) on 28th June. A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* was still present on 20th June, when it was seen at Bempton (Humberside), and a **Crane** *Grus grus* was found at Boa Island (Co. Fermanagh) on 10th. A **Spotted Crake**

Porzana porzana was heard calling at Walberswick at the beginning of the month, and another was found at Walney (Cumbria) on 21st.

Seabirds

Following last month's surprise discovery of a **Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* on TV, another was seen on 17th at Dawlish Warren (Devon) (plate 243), coincidentally the locality of an earlier TV *Birdwatch*. Other rare terns included a **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* at Kinsale (Co. Cork) on 28th and a **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* at Norwich (Norfolk) late in the month. A juvenile **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*, still retaining its egg tooth, was an intriguing record from Sandymount (Co. Dublin) on 27th. Others were reported from Hayle (Cornwall), with two on 27th, and Sandwich Bay on 4th and 24th. Sea watches at Porthgwarra (Cornwall) on 27th and 28th



revealed small movements of shearwaters, with totals over the two days of 20 **Cory's** *Calonectris diomedea*, two **Great Puffins** *gravis*, 35 **Sooty** *P. griseus* and two 'Balearic' **Manx**

P. puffinus mauretanicus. On 28th, 25 **Great Skuas** *Stercorarius skua* were also counted; elsewhere, a **Pomarine Skua** *S. pomarinus* was seen off Malin Head (Co. Donegal) on 21st and two **Long-tailed Skuas** *S. longicaudus* at Birsay (Orkney) on 16th.

Five **Leach's Petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were seen on 28th, off St John's Point (Co. Down).

Wildfowl

Of note was the first breeding record of **Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* on the Isle of Man, a nest with eggs being found on 15th June. Other reports included a 'Green-winged' **Teal** *Anas crecca carolinensis* at Minsmere on 7th and an **American Wigeon** *A. americana* in eclipse plumage at Ballycotton (Co. Cork).

Birds of prey

Further summer sightings of **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* were received, from Tees-mouth on 6th and from localities along the north Norfolk coast between 12th and 14th. Also reported, on 13th at Horsey (Norfolk), was a **Red Kite** *M. milvus*. A **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco subbuteo* delighted observers at the end of the month in Cheddar Gorge (Somerset), a summering **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* was an interesting find in the New Forest (Hampshire) on 21st, as was a **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* at Elmley on 28th. The **Scops Owl** *Otus scops* reported last month on Orkney was found dead on 12th, and is being examined for signs of captivity.

Early passerine movements

The invasion of **Crossbills** *Loxia curvirostra* in

June continued into July: Fair Isle's count reached 31 on 8th, and a few were to be found at Spurn from 9th; a late June record was of 31 at Bampton on 27th. Five **Parrot Crossbills** *L. pytyopsittacus* at Walsey Hills, Cley, on 17th and 18th, however, would most likely have come from the nearby flock at Holkham Pines (Norfolk). A very unseasonal movement of **Siskins** *Carduelis spinus* was observed at Fair Isle, involving juveniles, the maximum number being eight on 13th, and farther south at Spurn numbers were higher, with 24 on 18th and 96 on 19th. Other unseasonal reports included another 'Hooded' **Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone cornix*, this time on Lodmoor (Dorset), and, even more intriguing, another report of **Cedar Waxwing** *Bombycilla cedrorum*, this time of one found dead in Oxfordshire. More 'normal' rarities seen included a further report of a **Serin** *Serinus serinus* from Wells (Norfolk) on 8th, a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* at Salcombe (Devon) from 5th to 7th, a **Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* at Spurn on 20th, a **Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* on the Calf of Man, a **Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* at Porthgwarra on 28th, and a **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* on Fair Isle on 2nd. Also on Fair Isle, there was another **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans*, from 22nd to 31st; two earlier records of this species were also received from Aberdaron (Gwynedd) on 30th May and on the Isle of May (Fife) on 24th and 25th June. This latter locality also recorded an **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* on 22nd and 23rd May. Late arriving spring records of the May 'wreck' of **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* were of one in a garden in Yeovil (Somerset) on 14th,

243. Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* (with Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* and Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*), Devon, July 1985 (David J. Hopkins)





244. Juvenile Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*,
Kent, July 1985 (David Tipling)

and one on Handa Island (Highland). The two **Oriental Cuckoos** *Cuculus saturatus* at Spurn continued to be seen until 9th and 14th, respectively (plates 245 & 246). An **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* also visited Spurn on 6th, and two were seen at Porthgwarra on 25th; even more exotic was a **Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* on Hoy (Orkney) on 11th, and a **Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* was a surprise visitor to Fair Isle on 24th.

Recent rarities decisions

The record of **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* on Fair Isle (Shetland) in August 1982 has not been accepted. The record of two **Pallid Swifts** *Apus pallidus* at Portland (Dorset) in November 1984 has been accepted. The already accepted record of **Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* at Minster (Kent) from February to April 1983 is considered by the Rarities Committee to relate to a wild individual. (Contributed by P. G. Lansdown)

245 & 246. Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*, Humberside, June 1985 (David M. Cottridge)

Latest news

In first half of September, scattering of **Spotted Crakes** at half a dozen localities including Thrapston (Northamptonshire); **Broad-billed Sandpiper** at Broad Lough; four **Pectoral Sandpipers** together at Ballycotton and four separately at Minsmere; **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* at Weaver Bend, Frodsham (Cheshire); two **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* at Blacktoft (Humberside); and **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* at Wisbech Sewage-farm. **Little** *Emberiza pusilla* and **Rustic Buntings** *E. rustica* together on Fair Isle, and—a major rarity in Ireland—**Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* at Ballycotton.



Reviews

A Sound Guide to Waders in Britain. Compiled from recordings by 15 recordists; produced (and sleeve notes) by John Burton and Nigel Tucker. REC545 Album, ZCM545 Cassette. BBC Records, London, 1984. £2.99.

This well-produced record succeeds admirably in its twin aims of providing both an aid to wader identification and a great deal of listening pleasure, and can be highly recommended. Side 1, entitled 'Waders on their breeding grounds', covers all well-established British breeding species (plus Kentish Plover), with emphasis on songs and alarm calls. The birds are grouped into six bands by habitat. On side 2, the habitat is 'Tidal estuary' and we are treated to non-breeding calls of 32 wader species regular in Britain at passage times. The sleeve features an attractive colour photograph of six wader species, an introduction by Tony Soper, a programme of the soundtrack, and brief notes on the birds included.

The beginner wishing to learn the waders will find this record a most useful reference to a wide range of calls, many of which defy adequate description in words. In the main, the recordings are typical of the species in question. Sleeve-note text is minimal, owing to shortage of space, and refers readers to field-guides for further information on the birds. A 'quick reference guide', listing the time from the start of each side to the major track for each species, uses space, but gives no extra information, and would have been more helpful if ordered by species and including occurrences in the background of other tracks (some of which are referred to in the programme). Listeners relying entirely on the sleeve notes to identify the calls will be annoyed that times are not given instead from the start of each band. For the more expert wader-watcher, such rarely heard calls as those of Ruff, Dotterel and the phalaropes will perhaps be the highlights.

The soundtrack has no spoken commentaries, few scrolls, and features impressive stereo effects. At a more general level, therefore, all can enjoy nearly 50 minutes of high-quality recordings of some of the most evocative—and some, arguably, among the best-loved—of British bird sounds.

JOHN MARCHANT

A Lighthouse Notebook. By Norman McCanch. Michael Joseph, London, 1985. 200 pages; 67 colour plates; 15 black-and-white plates; 86 line-drawings. £12.95.

This book gives a daily account of the natural history, mainly birds, encountered during the author's occupation as a relief lighthouse-keeper at five of Britain's lighthouses. These range from the island 'lights' such as Coquet, St Mary's and South Bishop, the on-shore light at Cromer, and the 'real' (author's word) lighthouse of Longships.

Although the daily entries, some of only a few lines, others of two pages in length, concentrate mainly on the resident and passing birds, there are also many other interesting anecdotes. Those that stayed with me concerned the storms, especially those at Longships, and a particularly nasty 'blow' at South Bishop that left seaweed 50m above sea level on the gallery floor and also meant that the hourly trip across the yard to inspect the generators had to be done on all fours.

There are also chapters on lighthouse routines and other aspects of the author's life, and a foreword by Wynford Vaughan-Thomas.

The text is illuminated throughout by many black-and-white vignettes, together with many full-page illustrations in colour. These, apart from the five depicting each of the lighthouses, are mainly portraits of the birds, with a few of plants and animals. Many of these plates show 'live' creatures, but sadly there are far too many paintings of dead birds. Why is there a less-than-welcome trend to include 'Tunncliffe type' dead-bird references in books of late?

In total, I enjoyed this book, and many times found myself fully involved in the daily events. It did not, however, convince me to give up my cosy life for one of curved bunks and curved mattresses.

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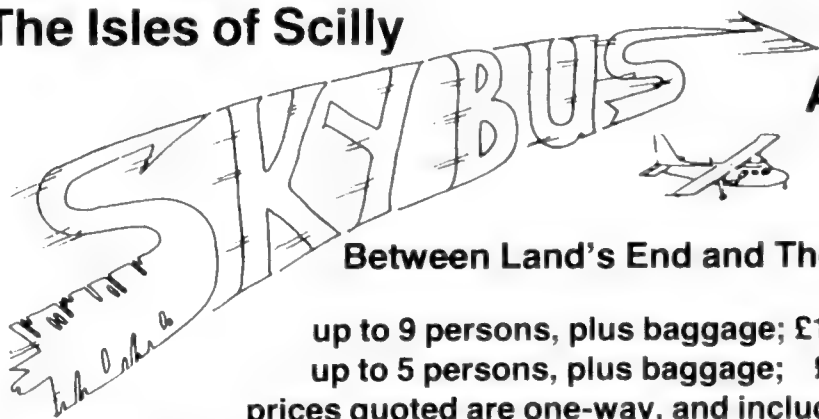
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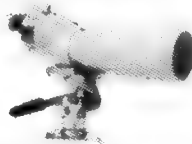
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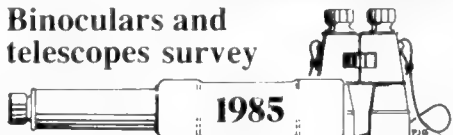
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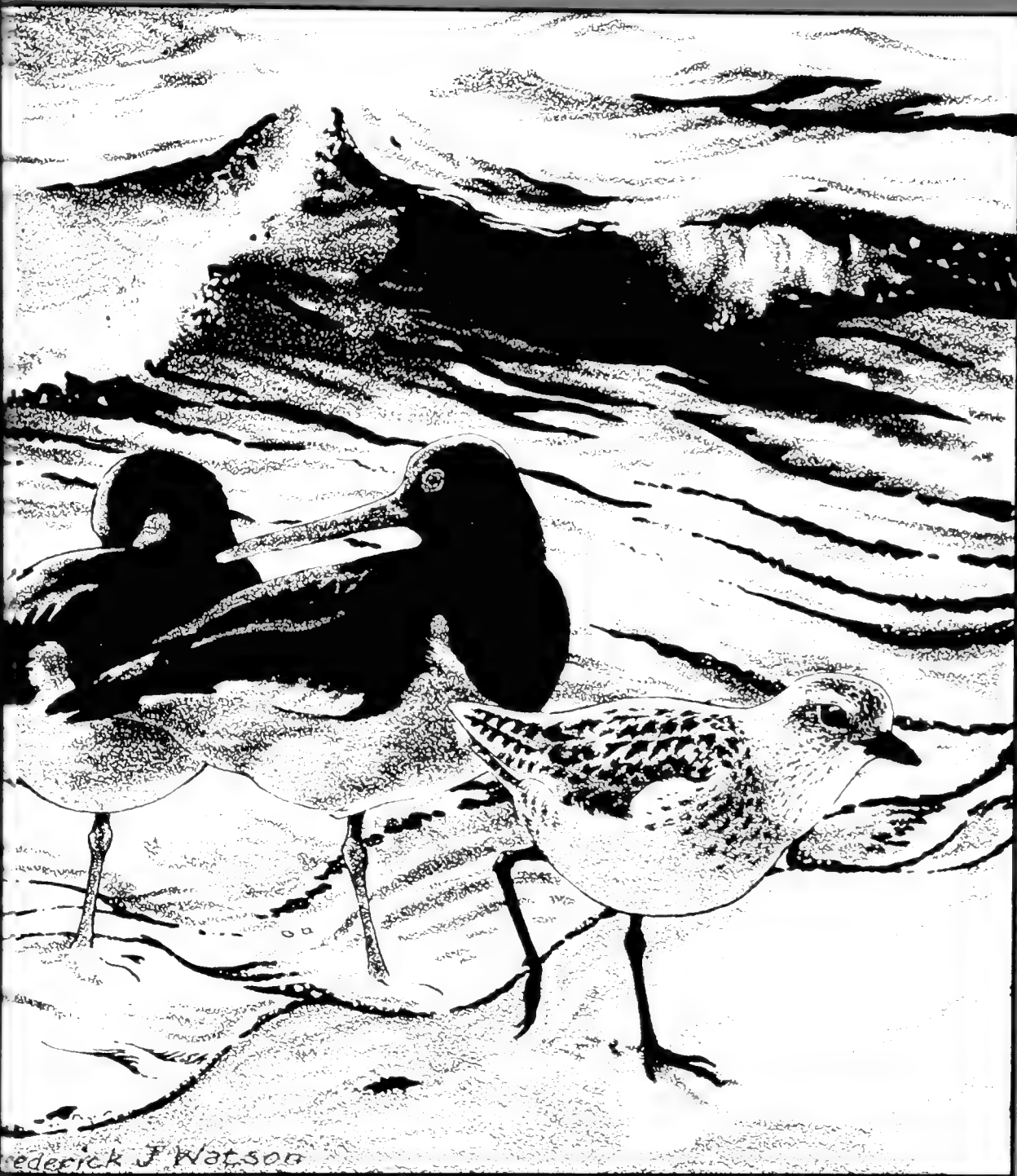
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British Birds

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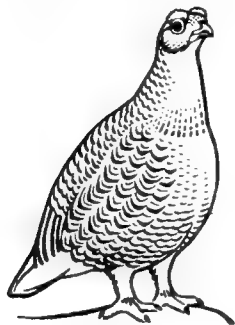
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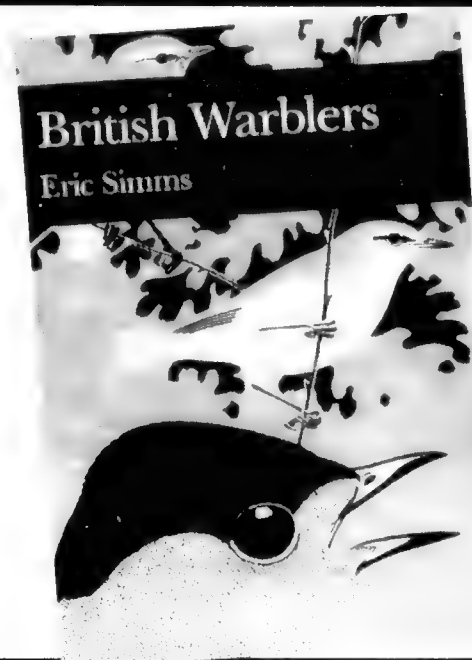
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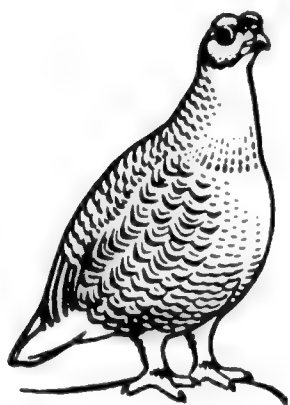
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- * *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* edited by Stanley Cramp and others (OUP) vols. 1-4. £60.00 per volume
If you haven't got them, you'd better get them. (Latest reviews: *Brit. Birds* 73: 602; 76: 324-325; 78: 468-470)
- * *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds* edited by John K. Terres (Audubon Society) £60.00
Massive volume, and superb photographs. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 74: 410)

Seventy-five years ago...

'ON SOME ISLE OF WIGHT' BIRDS. RAVEN (*Corvus corax*).—We Hampshire naturalists were no little grieved last year that the last pair of Freshwater Ravens were first robbed of their five eggs and then shot. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, aided by Lord Tennyson and their excellent watcher, Alfred Isaacs, did all that they could to bring the offenders to justice, but in vain. However, we have the good news to report this year that a pair nested in another part of the island and safely brought off three young.' (*Brit. Birds* 4: 181, November 1910)

Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1984

Sponsored by

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*Michael J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee with comments by
A. R. Dean and K. E. Vinicombe*

This is our twenty-seventh annual report. The work of the Rarities Committee has again been sponsored by ZEISS WEST GERMANY. We greatly welcome this financial assistance, which enables us to cope with the expense of processing and publishing the large volume of records, and to include photographs and drawings of some of the rarities in this report.

Committee membership is listed on the inside front cover each month, and on the back of the title page in each volume. Other matters relating to its work during the year have been published already (*Brit. Birds* 78: 471-473). The Committee has dealt with 780 records for 1984, 84% of which have been accepted. About 294 records for 1984 and earlier years are still under consideration.

Records should be sent to the Secretary, Michael J. Rogers, preferably via the appropriate county or regional recorder. A copy of the list of species considered by the Committee, copies of the Rarities Committee Record Form (which should be used, or its format followed, when submitting reports), and a recently-updated fact sheet which sets out the constitution and aims of the Committee and describes the procedures followed when considering records, can be obtained from the Secretary (please enclose SAE).

Acknowledgments

As ever, we express our gratitude for the co-operation of observers, regional and county recorders, and bird observatories, without which this report would not be so complete and accurate. We are again grateful to the Irish Rare Birds Committee (formerly known as the Irish Records Panel) and the Northern Ireland Bird Records Committee for permission to include their accepted records, and to their respective secretaries, Kieran Grace and Mrs P. M. Vizard, for supplying details. Trevor Copp has liaised over Channel Islands rarity records, which are now dealt with by the Rarities Committee, and we are grateful for his co-operation. Details of accepted Channel Islands records are included in the species comments, but not in the running totals which are for the geographical unit of Britain and Ireland.

The Committee is indebted to many individuals and organisations for

assistance during the past year. A. R. Dean and K. E. Vinicombe have shared the compilation of the running species-totals and have written the species comments (non-passerines by KEV and passerines by ARD); the BTO, the NCC, the RSPB and the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, have liaised over various matters; and the following have been consulted for advice over particular records: Steen Christensen, P. R. Colston, Chris Corben, W. F. Curtis, Jon Dunn, Dave Eades, Lars Jonsson, Kenn Kaufman, Dr A. G. Knox, Lasse J. Laine, Dr M. A. Ogilvie, R. F. Porter, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Lars Svensson and Claudia Wilds.

Our report is again enhanced by the inclusion of photographs and sketches of rarities. We thank the observers concerned and all those who now routinely submit such valuable evidence with their descriptions, thereby greatly assisting the assessment process. PJJ

Pre-1984 records still under consideration

Pre-1984 records with which the Committee is currently involved include several Little Shearwaters *Puffinus assimilis*, two Madeiran Petrels *Oceanodroma castro*, the party of American Wigeons *Anas americana* at the Hayle Estuary (Cornwall) in 1981, Semipalmated/Western Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla/mauri* at Felixstowe (Suffolk) in 1982 and 1983, two Long-toed Stints *Calidris subminuta*, several South Polar Skuas *Stercorarius maccormicki*, two Lesser Crested Terns *Sterna bengalensis*, several Eagle Owls *Bubo bubo*, Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* at Portland (Dorset) in 1983, three Northern Mockingbirds *Mimus polyglottos*, two Short-toed Treecreepers *Certhia brachydactyla*, several Arctic Redpolls *Carduelis hornemanni*, two Pine Buntings *Emberiza leucocephalos*, and Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* at Sandbach (Cheshire) in 1970.

The Committee is also engaged upon reviews of both past and pending records of black-headed Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava feldegg*, Citrine Wagtails *M. citreola* and Two-barred Crossbills *Loxia leucoptera*.

Pre-1984 records still being investigated by the BOU Records Committee include White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* at Bough Beech Reservoir (Kent) in 1979, Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* at Dunwich (Suffolk) and Old Hall Marshes (Essex) in 1981, Grey-rumped Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes* at Dyfi Estuary (Dyfed/Gwynedd) in 1981, Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota* on St Agnes and St Mary's (Scilly) in 1983, White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* on the Calf of Man (Man) in 1983, Varied Thrush *Zoothera naevia* at Nanquidno (Cornwall) in 1982, and Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* at Holkham (Norfolk) in 1975.

PGL

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as in the 1983 report (77: 506-562). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled.

- (i) The details included for each record are more than one, and age and sex if known (in (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if the case of spring and summer records,

however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (5) date(s); and (6) observer(s) up to three in number, in alphabetical order. In accordance with our declared policy (see *Brit. Birds* 68: 1-4), the new county names have been used, and observers are asked to bear this in mind when submitting records.

(ii) In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the case of the very similar Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus*, however, we are continuing to publish indeterminable records, and this also applies to observations of pratincoles *Glareola* and of such difficult groups as albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata*.

(iii) The sequence of species, vernacular names and specific nomenclature follow *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1984). Any sight records of subspecies (including those of birds trapped and released) are normally referred to as 'showing the characters' of the race concerned.

(iv) The three numbers in brackets after each species' name refer respectively to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain and Ireland (excluding those 'At sea') (1) to the end of 1957, (2) for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (3) the current year. The decision as to whether one or more individuals was involved is often difficult and rather arbitrary, but the consensus of members is indicated by 'possibly the same' (counted as different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in totals), or 'the same' when the evidence is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is applied to records of the same species recurring at the same locality after a lapse of time, including those which occur annually at the same or nearby site. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee usually requires firm evidence before more than one is counted in the totals. A detailed breakdown of the figures for previous years is held by the Honorary Secretary.

(v) The world breeding range is given in brackets at the beginning of each species comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 72, 5)

Highland Portmahomack Bay, Ross & Cromarty, adult ♀, 16th June to 2nd July when found exhausted (plate 247), taken into care by R. H. Dennis, but died 19th July of aspergillosis (lung disease); skin now at Inverness Museum (G. C. Headlam, D. W. McAllister, G. MacNab).

247. Adult female White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*, Highland, June 1984 (*Dave Pullan*)



Orkney Rousay Sound, adult, 26th January to early April (C. J. Corse, M. Gray, E. R. Meek). Birsay, adult, 1st October (J. B. Ribbands). Glims Holm, adult, 18th to 19th December (K. Fairclough, M. Gray, E. R. Meek).

Shetland Bluemull Sound, adult, 6th November (P. M. Ellis, R. J. Tulloch). Whalsay, adult, since 26th November 1983, again 11th January (*Brit. Birds* 77: 508), present throughout year and considered same as that of 22nd April to 5th May 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 508) (Dr B. Marshall *et al.*).

(Arctic Russia eastwards to Arctic Canada) Some typical records. The annual average for the last ten years has been just under five.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 8, 1)

Gwynedd Aber Ogwen, Caernarvonshire, 13th November to 30th December (S. Hugheston-Roberts, C. Stephenson *et al.*).

Western Isles Askernish, South Uist, individual first seen 8th June 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 508) present throughout 1984 and to at least June 1985.

(North America) The South Uist individual seems set to emulate the first British Pied-billed Grebe, which spent five years on the Avon reservoirs. Strangely enough, there are still no Irish records.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 23, 0)

Shetland Hermaness, Unst, first seen 1972 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 508), present from 27th February (*Brit. Birds* 77: 335).

(Southern oceans) The 1960s produced 23 new albatross records, compared with 13 in the 1970s and only four so far in the 1980s. This apparent downturn may persuade those who have not yet made the Hermaness pilgrimage to think again: even albatrosses don't live for ever.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* (few, 20512, -)

1982 Kent Foreness, 30th July (F. Solly).

(East Atlantic and Mediterranean) A late record which takes the 1982 total to 45. This species is, of course, no longer considered by the Committee.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* (5, 55, 4)

Cleveland Hartlepool, two, 24th September (T. Francis, G. Icton, A. Robinson *et al.*).

Dyfed Strumble Head, 21st September (G. H. Rees).

Merseyside Hilbre, 2nd September (A. M. Stoddart).

1979 Humberside Flamborough Head, 30th September (P. A. Lassey, Miss I. Smith).

1981 Dyfed Skomer, ♂, 26th June to 10th July, trapped 29th June and 7th July (M. Alexander, P. C. James *et al.*) (*Ardea* 72: 236-237).

1982 Dyfed Skomer, ♂, 21st June to 25th July, same as 1981 individual (M. Alexander, P. C. James) (*Ardea* 72: 236-237).

(Atlantic south from Madeira and Caribbean, and southern oceans) The adjudication of seabird records presents a perennial problem to the Committee. Ways of improving the consideration of such records are currently being investigated. The above well-documented sightings presented no problems, but a number of earlier reports are still under consideration. The one in a burrow on Skomer was particularly intriguing.

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* (50, 8, 0)

1982 Gwent Magor, first seen 29th October 1981, to at least 3rd January (*Brit. Birds* 75: plates 34 & 35; 76: 479), last seen 7th (N. Odin, D. Upton).

(North America)

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 139, 1)

Norfolk Norwich, ♀, 31st May to 2nd June (Mr & Mrs E. Wilson per C. Durdin).

1983 Cornwall Loe Pool, Helston, ♂, 8th August (*Brit. Birds* 77: 509) was found dead.

(West Eurasia, Africa and Australia) No details have yet been received of 1984's first British breeding record. The Norwich individual spent three days feeding on goldfish at a garden pond before the tolerant owners finally put up a wire fence to get rid of it.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 150, 2)

Cornwall Skewjack, adult, 29th May (P. Harrison, M. P. Semmens *et al.*).

Kent Ashford, adult, 29th May (J. S. Russell).

1978 Yorkshire, South Graves Park, Sheffield, adult, 3rd to 9th July (R. P. Blagden *et al.*).

1983 Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, adult, 28th to 30th June (A. Ferguson *et al.*).

1983 Cleveland Redcar, juvenile, 9th October (*Brit. Birds* 77: 509) was on 8th.

1983 Dorset Radipole, probably second-summer, 23rd June (D. A. Bridges, D. Tutt *et al.*).

1983 Leicestershire Aylestone, adult, 25th to 27th April, two, 25th (*Brit. Birds* 77: 510); both present 25th to 28th (S. M. Andrews).

(South Eurasia, Africa and the Americas) The two late records for 1983 take that year's record total to a remarkable 22. In complete contrast, 1984 was the worst year since 1966.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 29, 2)

(Almost cosmopolitan in tropics; nearest regular breeding in south of France) None in Britain. Ireland had its fourth and fifth in 1984: in the Killag, Kilmore, Tacumshin area of Co. Wexford, from 18th November to 9th December and at Strokestown, New Ross, Co. Wexford, from mid November into December. This expanding species produced only two records before 1958, nine in the 1960s, nine in the 1970s and 13 so far in the 1980s. Surprisingly, of these most recent 13, 11 have been in western Britain or Ireland. It has turned up in all months except February and June, but 12 of the last 13 have been in winter (7th November to 5th April).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (23, 300, 19)

Cheshire Sandbach, 3rd May (A. G. Goodwin, A. R. Pay *et al.*).

Cornwall River Lynher, 26th August to 1st September (A. E. C. Aston, E. Griffiths, S. C. & Mrs P. S. Madge), also seen in Devon.

Cumbria Rockliffe area, 3rd June (A. Gremin).

Devon Higher Metcombe area, 13th April (G. H. Gush). Lopwell Reservoir, 15th to 17th August (R. M. Belringer, A. H. J. Harrop *et al.*), first seen Landulph Marsh 8th (per P. W. Ellicott); presumed same, Totnes, 5th to 12th September (R. E. Bailey, R. D. T. Shute *et al.*), Wembury Point, 22nd (Dr R. B. Wright *et al.*), 24th (P. F. Goodfellow); still at Yealm Estuary, November (per A. H. J. Harrop). Differing individual, Erme Estuary, 24th August to at least 14th September (R. M. Belringer, Dr R. B. Wright *et al.*).

Dorset Langton Herring, 5th to 11th May (J. Elliott, G. & Mrs P. Walbridge). Christchurch Harbour, 15th May (D. N. Smith).

Glamorgan, West Oxwich and Llandimore Marsh, 3rd to 9th June (D. G. Davis, D. Rich, R. G. Smith *et al.*).

Hampshire Farlington Marshes, 22nd June (G. Farwell, T. Jennings, D. J. Radford), thereafter many localities to 1st October (per E. J. Wiseman).

Northampton Thrapston Gravel-pits, 10th to 15th May (D. Caswell *et al.*).

Shetland Tingwall, Scalloway, Collarfirth and Weisdale, 1st June to 9th July (D. Coutts, M. G. Richardson *et al.*).

Somerset Steart, 1st June (N. J. & Mrs S. G. D'Agorne).

Strathclyde Baron's Haugh Nature Reserve, Lanark, 17th to 26th May (T. Baker *et al.*).

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, 23rd May (C. M. & Mrs B. James, J. Young *et al.*).

Wight Bembridge, 25th to at least 28th April (P. J. Barden *et al.*).

1973 Cumbria Bowness-on-Solway area, 26th December to at least 16th March 1974 (Miss A. M. Baer, Miss E. H. Rhone, J. B. Todd).

1974 Cumbria See 1973 Cumbria above.

1981 Cumbria Border Marsh, Solway Firth, 29th May to 4th June (J. J. Carruthers, G. Horne).

1982 Yorkshire, North Seamer Pits, Scarborough, 12th to 13th June (Dr C. Brown, M. D. & Mrs D. M. Simmonds).

1983 Hampshire Oxy Marsh, 3rd June (Mrs A. Smart); same, near Pennington Marsh, 3rd (R. P. Coe *et al.*).

1983 Suffolk Orfordness, 3rd to 9th August (*Brit. Birds* 77: 511), also Minsmere, 28th July; Havergate Island, occasionally 4th to 26th August; River Deben, 31st July, 30th August; Martlesham Creek, 2nd to 17th September (per P. W. Murphy).

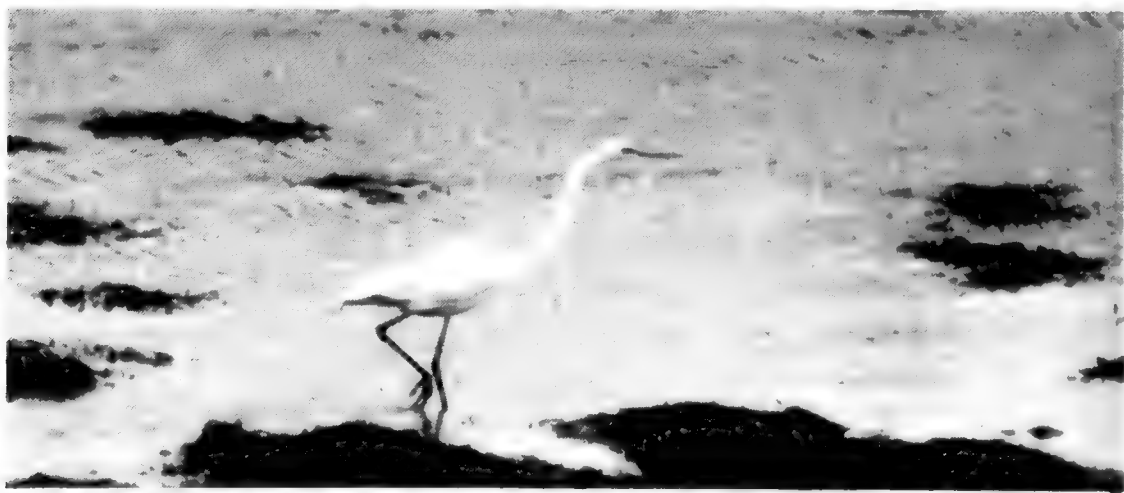
(South Eurasia, Africa and Australia) In Ireland, singles at the Ferta Estuary, Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry, in April and May; at Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, on 15th May; at Corballis, Co. Dublin, on 27th May; and at Shannon Airport Lagoon, Co. Clare, on 12th and 13th July. Also, a late record of one at Lissagriffin, Co. Cork, on 10th April 1982. Another good year, bettered only by 47 in 1970 and 22 in 1983 (and equalled in 1982). The annual average for the last ten years has been 13. The recent high totals correspond with a 23% increase in France between 1974 and 1981 and a marked northward range extension (*Brit. Birds* 77: 587).

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 15, 3)

Gwynedd Minfford, Bangor, 7th August (C. Stephenson).

Suffolk Near Walberswick, 22nd July (Miss J. H. Fitzgerald, Dr E. R. J. Hinde); presumed same, Minsmere, 31st July to 27th September (S. Callaghan, T. D. Charlton *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 77: plates 243-245).

(Almost cosmopolitan, extremely local in Europe) In view of the recent upsurge in records, it seems fitting that Ireland should now get its first: one at Moneygold, Co. Sligo, from 22nd May into June (plate 248).



248. Great White Egret *Egretta alba*, Co. Sligo, May 1981 (Oran O'Sullivan)

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (90, 337, —)

1982 Glamorgan, West Oswich, adult, 30th May to 5th June (*Brit. Birds* 76: 482), to at least 22nd July (P. Britton, N. Odin *et al.*).

1982 Greater London See 1982 Surrey below.

1982 Humberside Southfield Reservoir, adult, 26th August (T. A. Ede).

1982 Surrey Beddington Sewage-farm, adult, 11th April (*Brit. Birds* 76: 428), locality is in Greater London.

1982 Yorkshire, South Barnby Dun, adult, 4th May (P. H. Mason).

(South-central Eurasia, north to the Netherlands; also Africa) No longer considered by the Committee, but these extras took the 1982 total to 18.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (26, 24, 0)

1983 Lothian Dirleton, 18th June (J. & Mrs J. Levene), probably same as Borders/Strathclyde individual, 1st to 2nd June (*Brit. Birds* 77: 512).

(Iberia, and Eurasia from France to China, also southern Africa) A blank year in 1984, but, in view of recent breeding records in Belgium and France (*Brit. Birds* 73: 257; 77: 587) and the high total of 37 in Sweden in 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 339), British records seem likely to show a continued increase.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 25, 0)

Essex Little Clacton, two, 26th December (P. Newton), presumed same as Kent individuals.

Kent Stodmarsh, two, since 1975 and 1979 respectively (*Brit. Birds* 77: 512), to at least 12th April and, at latest, 1st November to end of year, summering as usual on Sheppey, 14th April to at least 22nd July (per D. W. Taylor *et al.*).

1983 Kent Stodmarsh, from 1st September to end of year (*Brit. Birds* 77: 512), at least one, 27th to 28th August (P. M. Potts).

(Cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colonies in Balkans)

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (47, 66, 1)

Kent Cliffe, adult, 10th March (E. D. & Mrs V. Lloyd).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia) None at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, in the 1983/84 winter, only the fifth since 1958 which has failed to produce any. Escaped individuals were also seen: in Northamptonshire from 20th January to at least 10th June; in Humberside on 1st May; and in Derbyshire from 30th September to the end of the year.



249. Adult Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* of race *nigricans*, Norfolk, January 1984 (Tim Lubbock)

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* (1, 16, 7)

Individuals showing characters of the North American and east Siberian

race *B. b. nigricans*, colloquially known as 'Black Brant', were recorded as follows:

Essex Kirby-le-Soken, adult, at least 22nd February (Dr S. Cox). Jaywick, differing adult, at least 29th February (Dr S. & Mrs P. A. Cox).

Norfolk Cley, adult, 11th December 1983 to 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 513), final date uncertain (plate 249). Cley area, adults 6th November to early 1985, two, at least 17th November (M. S. Cavanagh, P. J. Heath *et al.*).

Surrey Staines Reservoirs, immature, 27th October to 18th November (D. Coker, R. B. Hastings, A. V. Moon *et al.*).

(Arctic North America and East Siberia) In Ireland, one at Carlingford Lough, Co. Louth, from 4th to 10th November; and one at Corballis, Co. Dublin, from 18th November to 24th February 1985. Late Irish records involve one at Strangford Lough, Co. Down, on 15th September 1982; one from 14th November 1982 to 9th January 1983; and one on 24th September 1983; one at Faughanvale, Lough Foyle, Co. Derry, from 6th October to 14th November 1982. Records of this race have recently been analysed (*Brit. Birds* 77: 458-465). Seven is a new peak for this unassuming goose.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (15, 13, 1)

Essex Kirby-le-Soken, adult, 21st and 24th February (C. Brett, the late Mrs P. Harris, M. & N. Hutchings); same Mersea Island, 25th (A. & B. Goodey *et al.*). Presumed same as Suffolk individual below.

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, adult, 17th January to 1st March (R. D. Goater, D. B. Paynter *et al.*), presumed same as Hampshire individual below.

Hampshire Ringwood area, adult, 27th December 1983 to 14th January (*Brit. Birds* 77: 513), not present 17th and presumed same as Gloucestershire individual.

Lincolnshire North Coates/Saltfleet area, adult, 24th to 30th November (G. P. Catley, M. Davies, M. J. Warren).

Norfolk North coast localities, 11th November 1983 to 17th March (*Brit. Birds* 77: 513, plate 210), present at various localities between Holme and Wells to 23rd March (per G. E. Dunmore).

Suffolk Falkenham, adult, 11th December 1983 to 19th February (*Brit. Birds* 77: 513), later seen in Essex above.

(West Siberia) Commuting between the Hampshire Avon and Slimbridge (some 105 km northwest) also occurred in January 1967 and January 1969. One seen in the Barmston-Hornsea Mere area of Humber-side during March is assumed to have been an escape.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 108, 5)

Dorset See Hampshire.

Hampshire Bisterne, ♂, 5th to at least 14th January, also occasionally at Week Farm, Dorset; presumed same, Ivy Lake, 18th to 19th February (J. M. Clarke, R. I. Thorpe, J. M. Walters *et al.*).

Highland Wick, Caithness, ♂, 14th April (K. W. Banks, S. G. Mackay).

Northamptonshire Ditchford, Ringstead and Thrapston Gravel-pits, ♂, since 22nd October 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 514), to 11th March.

1983 Dumfries & Galloway Loch Ryan, ♂, 13th November to at least February 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 513), still present 26th February (R. H. Hogg, M. Scott).

(North America) Three males in Ireland: at Inch Strand, Co. Kerry, on 3rd October; at Lough Beg, Co. Derry, from 13th October to the end of the year; and at Lough Foyle, Co. Derry, on 18th October. A fairly typical showing: the annual average for the last ten years has been about six.

Teal *Anas crecca* (13, 194, 10)

Drakes showing characters of the North American race *A. c. carolinensis*, colloquially known as 'Green-winged Teal', were recorded as follows:

Cheshire Woolston Eyes, 5th February (R. Taylor).

Dyfed Pentwd Meadows, Cardigan, 10th December (P. E. Davis).

Gwynedd Llyn Alaw, Anglesey, 19th November to 13th December (J. Clark).

Lancashire Martin Mere, 4th to 7th November (C. J. McCarty).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 11th November (D. M. Jenkins, A. C. Sims).

Norfolk Welney, at least 27th to 29th April (J. B. Kemp, R. Neale, J. Revett).

Strathclyde Loch Don, Mull, at least 12th February (R. F. & Mrs E. M. Coomber).

Tayside Kinkell Bridge, Aberuthven, 26th to 28th April (M. S. Cavanagh, J. G. Steele *et al.*).

1983 Glamorgan, West Oxwich, 16th January to at least 5th February (*Brit. Birds* 77: 514), still present 28th (N. Odin, I. D. Smith).

1983 Humberside Blacktoft Sands, 23rd to 24th June (K. Allison, A. Grieve, F. I. Holt *et al.*).

1983 Humberside/Yorkshire, North Wheldrake Ings, 17th December (T. J. Barker), probably returning individual of 1981/82 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 514).

1983 Shetland Sandwater Loch, 16th March to 11th April (I. Sandison *et al.*).

1983 Yorkshire, North Long Preston, 8th March (E. Jackson, S. Ralph, B. Shorrocks).

1983 Yorkshire, West Fairburn Ings, 27th October (A. Burn).

(North America) Two in Ireland: at Kinsalebeg, Co. Waterford, on 14th November; and at Lough Foyle, Co. Derry, on 2nd December. This subspecies has averaged about 13 a year over the last decade, so 1984 was pretty typical.

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (1, 11, 1)

Cornwall Crowdy Reservoir, sex indeterminate, 5th December (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown).

Gwynedd Aber, ♂, first seen 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 515), present throughout year: maximum of eight hybrids, 16th September (T. Gravett, N. Odin *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, ♀, first seen 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 515) and thought present throughout 1983, but disappeared sometime after autumn that year. At least four hybrids present to at least April 1985 (per M. J. Rogers).

(North America) The Tresco female was presumably seven years old when she disappeared; she had bred at least six times, and produced some 22 hybrid young. The one in Cornwall was the first new arrival since 1981.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 94, 8)

Devon Braunton Marsh, ♀ or immature, 16th to 20th September (A. J. Culshaw).

Grampian Fraserburgh, ♀ or eclipse ♂, 16th September (K. Duncan, R. Smith), shot, Strathbeg, 19th (per R. H. Hogg).

Hertfordshire Stocker's Lake, ♀, 20th to at least 27th April (R. R. Drew, A. V. Moon *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell, ♂, 11th to about 16th June (A. Banwell, M. J. Keene, J. B. Kemp); Welney, ♂, 30th September to 5th October (J. B. Kemp *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, sex uncertain, 14th to 22nd September (M. Gray *et al.*).

Western Isles Loch Hallan, South Uist, pair, at least 17th June (J. K. Archer, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).

1983 Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, ♂, 22nd June (*Brit. Birds* 77: 515), again 25th (D. J. Odell).

1983 Shetland Unst individual (*Brit. Birds* 77: 515) shown in plate 274.

(North America) Three were present on Mannez Pool, Alderney, Channel Islands, from 19th to at least 20th September 1983, and two were eventually shot. The last ten years have averaged seven per annum, but, surprisingly, there were only eight in Ireland during that period. Dull juvenile Garganeys *A. querquedula* are, perhaps, an under-emphasised pitfall in autumn.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (1, 163, 9)**Cheshire** Woolston Eyes, ♂, 26th May to at least 28th August (B. Martin, R. Taylor *et al.*).**Cornwall** Upper Tamar Reservoir, ♀, 15th November to 1985 (T. J. Dingle, G. P. Sutton *et al.*) (plate 250).**250.** Female Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*, Cornwall, November 1984 (Graham Sutton)**Gloucestershire** Flaxley Pool, ♂, 28th December to 1st January 1985 (J. W. Hale, F. A. Lander, J. D. Sanders *et al.*).**Highland** Insh Marshes, ♂, 28th March and 1st April; presumed same, many dates, 11th October to at least January 1985; presumed returning individual of past five winters (*Brit. Birds* 77: 515) (Z. Bhatia *et al.*).**Humberside** Tophill Low Reservoir, ♂, since 30th October 1983 below, to 29th February and 31st March to 20th April (I. Forsyth, J. B. Leeson *et al.*).**Nottinghamshire** Carburton, ♂, 30th September (L. Holmes).**Orkney** Holm, ♂, 7th to 8th May (J. A. & Mrs R. McCutcheon); same, Orphir, 13th, then Burray, 2nd to 16th June (C. J. Booth, Mrs J. Cromarty *et al.*).**Shetland** Sandness, ♂, at least 20th November (P. V. Harvey, K. Osborn *et al.*).**Strathclyde** Port Charlotte, Islay, ♂, 23rd January to at least 15th February (R. D. Bennion *et al.*).**Suffolk** Benacre, ♂, 25th to 26th October (R. C. Smith *et al.*).**1981 Highland** Insh Marshes, ♂, since 1980, 9th February and 15th to 31st March (*Brit. Birds* 77: 515); presumed same, 10th November (R. Leavett per Z. Bhatia).**1982 Leicestershire** Rutland Water, ♂, 11th to 18th August (T. Appleton, R. E. Davis, C. Park).**1983 Humberside** Tophill Low Reservoir, ♂, since 31st December 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 487), to 7th April (R. A. Rose *et al.*). See also Humberside above.**1983 Humberside/Yorkshire, North** Wheldrake Ings, ♂, 7th May (T. J. Barker), probably same as Tophill Low Reservoir individual above.

(North America) Two males in Ireland: at Dunfanaghy, Co. Donegal, on 31st March; and on the North Slob, Co. Wexford, from 13th to the end of December. An improvement on the seven new records in 1983, but it is always difficult to be certain how many relate to wandering individuals.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 108, 1)**Grampian** Ythan Estuary, ♂, 19th May to at least 4th June; same, Blackdog, June (Dr M. V. Bell *et al.*). Peterhead, ♂, 6th November (M. Innes).**Highland** Loch Fleet and usual east Sutherland localities, ♂, all year (per A. R. Mainwood *et al.*), presumed same as 1983 individual (*Brit. Birds* 77: 516).**Strathclyde** Turnberry Point, ♂, 10th to 12th March (G. Cunningham, R. H. Hogg *et al.*). Wemyss and Meikle Bay area, ♂, 10th December to at least 13th January 1985 (R. M. Smyth). All presumed same as individual last reported early January 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 516).**1983 Strathclyde** Ardmore, ♂, 9th January; same, Bute, 28th April to 2nd May; same, Woodhall, 13th November (I. Hopkins, J. J. Sweeney *et al.* per R. H. Hogg); all presumed same as 1982 individual (*Brit. Birds* 77: 516).

(Circumpolar Arctic) The Peterhead bird is the only one treated as new in the totals. It certainly seems that our supply of King Eiders has dried up, in marked contrast to the situation in Sweden, where there was a record 51 in 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 339).

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* (5, 8, 0)

Western Isles Vorrán Island, South Uist, ♂, first seen 1972 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 516), apparently last seen 12th August (S. J. M. Gantlett).

(Arctic Russia to extreme northwestern Canada) There must have been hundreds of intrepid observers who, over the last 13 years, made the long northward trek to see this stunning duck. Indeed, the visitor's book at the tiny Howmore hostel must read like a Who's Who of British twitching. Unfortunately, it now seems that Steller's Eider will revert to its former gross-rarity status, although it is of interest that there were two reports from Belgium in 1983/84 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 339).

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* (75, 127, 35)

Cornwall Towan Head, immature, 24th November (S. M. Christophers).

Dumfries & Galloway Loch Ryan, ♀, 7th October (R. W. Forrester *et al.*).

Dyfed Burry Port, immature, 6th to 7th October (C. Harper, I. K. Morgan, E. J. Smith).

Fife St Andrew's, ♂ and ♀, 3rd to 9th March (D. N. Bakewell, G. Megson *et al.*) (fig. 1), 18th March, 1st April (G. Andrew, A. Brown); ♂ only, 9th December to at least 27th January 1985 (D. E. Dickson, R. Shand *et al.*).

Glamorgan, West Worm's Head, Gower, ♂, 4th February (P. A. Dean, W. P. Edmunds, C. Jones).

Grampian Spey Bay, immature ♂, 17th April; two ♂♂ and ♀, 12th December, ♂ and ♀ remaining to at least 5th February 1985 (S. J. Aspinall *et al.*).

Gwynedd Llanfairfechan, ♂, since 15th December 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 517), to 6th April (B. Boothroyd).

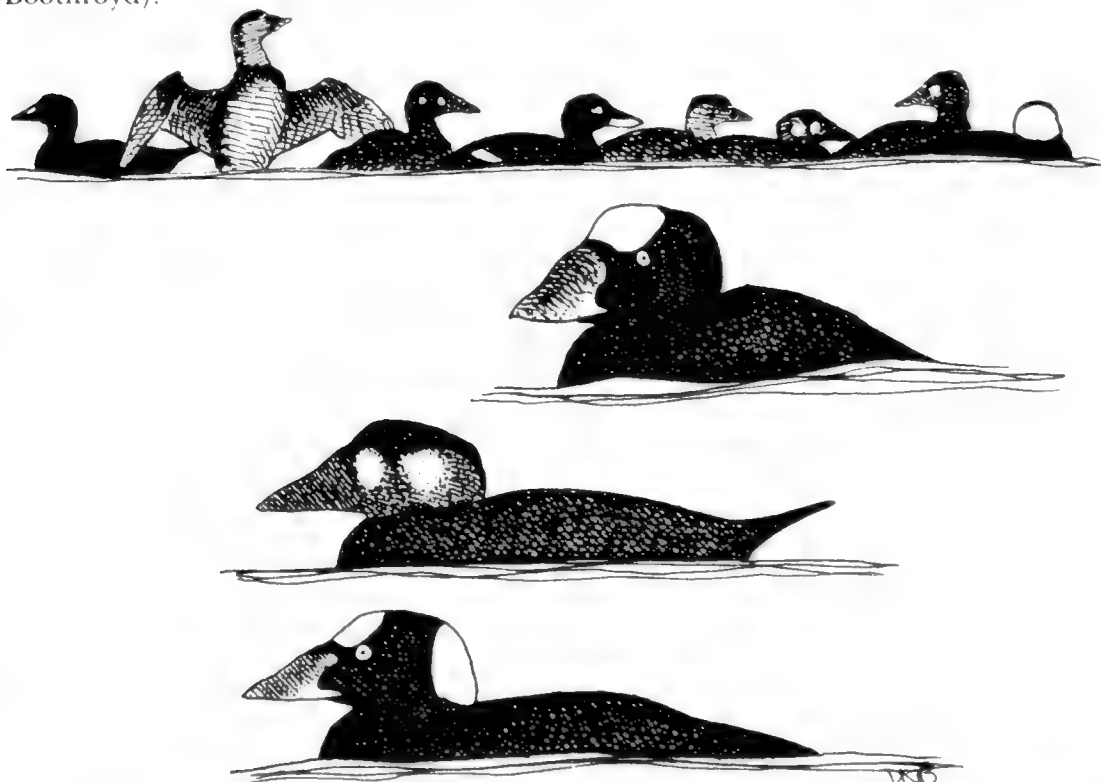


Fig. 1. Male and female Surf Scoters *Melanitta perspicillata*, Fife, March 1984 (D. N. Bakewell)

Highland Loch Fleet and Embo area, ♂, 8th March, 23rd April, 5th June, 27th September to 21st October, 18th, 28th December, all dates presumed to relate to same individual (per A. R. Mainwood *et al.*), presumed same as one or other of late 1983 individuals (*Brit. Birds* 77: 517).

Kent Dungeness, ♂, 14th April (S. W. Gale, T. J. Toohig *et al.*).

Lothian Gosford Bay, ♂ and ♀, 9th April to 7th May (G. Anderson, A. Brown *et al.*).

Orkney Hoxa, South Ronaldsay, ♀, 18th June (Dr R. A. Cheke, Dr J. A. Cole).

Scilly St Mary's, ♀, 2nd October (L. Allan, S. R. Bierley *et al.*).

1981 Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig Pool, immature, 11th October (*Brit. Birds* 76: 488), was found by P. Bristow and J. R. Smith; also seen at this locality, 25th October (M. Chown, N. Odin, D. T. Pitman *et al.*).

1982 Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, ♂, 24th January (*Brit. Birds* 77: 517), was ♀ or immature.

1983 Highland Fort William, ♂, 26th June (Ms H. Young).

(North America) Also, 18 in Ireland: seven (four adult males, one first-winter male, one adult female and one first-winter female) at Ballinesker, Co. Wexford, from 7th January to 31st March; four (three adult males and a first-year) at Lehinch, Co. Clare, from 28th March to 7th April; adult male at Laytown, Co. Meath, from 10th November to mid December; four (adult male and three females) at Dundrum Bay, Co. Down, on 9th November; and a first-winter male at Bundoran, Co. Donegal, on 1st December. The six reported from Co. Down in the 1983 Report (*Brit. Birds* 77: 518) referred to only four individuals altogether. This year's remarkable total of 35 represents a new peak for this species, whose annual average over the last ten years has been 16 or 17. The seven at Ballinesker are particularly noteworthy, although eight in Spey Bay, Grampian, on 7th January 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 464) is the record to beat. It is always difficult to hazard a guess as to how many are veterans from earlier years, but the following have been treated as such: two males in Grampian; male in Highland; two males in Co. Wexford; male in Co. Meath; and the four in Co. Down.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 62, 4)

Devon Lundy, 20th April (R. J. Campey). Brixham and Scabbacombe Sands, 29th August (G. F. Barlow and family).

Norfolk Loddon, 1st June (N. Davidson).

Sussex, East Pett Level, 30th April (B. H. Flack).

1983 Kent Ashford, 6th September (P. Chantler).

(Most of Eurasia, Africa and Australia) The late 1983 record takes that year's total to a new peak of nine. This raptor has now been annual since 1974, with a yearly average of about five. The upsurge here coincides with recent breeding in Belgium (*Brit. Birds* 75: 570) and increases elsewhere in Europe, such as in Luxembourg (*Brit. Birds* 78: 340).

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (many, 9, 1)

Norfolk See below.

Suffolk Walberswick, first-year, 14th April (C. R. Naunton, R. B. & Mrs D. C. Tozer *et al.*), also Oulton Broad, 14th (R. C. Smith), Halesworth, 17th (P. F. Goodfellow); found shot, moribund, near Wells, Norfolk, 11th May; died in care 12th; ringed as nestling, Warder See, Schleswig-Holstein, West Germany, 5th June 1983 (D. A. Henshilwood *et al.*).

(Southwest Greenland, Iceland and Eurasia) This record continues the recent encouraging run of apparently genuine vagrants in eastern counties. Details of another record, the one in the Brill area of Buckinghamshire, have never been submitted, despite its vast viewing audience. At a time

when this magnificent raptor is on the verge of becoming re-established here, the disgraceful shooting of the Norfolk individual serves as a poignant reminder of the mindless destruction which led to its original extermination.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 263, 5)

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, ♀, 7th June (D. N. Smith).

Glamorgan, West Crymlyn Bog, immature ♂, 18th to 23rd May (R. H. Davies, C. Evans, R. G. Smith *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 77: plates 154-156).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-summer ♂, 4th to 17th June (P. V. Harvey, K. Osborn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Eshaness, first-summer ♂, 16th to 24th June (D. Coutts, D. Landsman *et al.*).

Suffolk Rendlesham Forest, ♂, 6th to 9th May (B. K. & S. Abbott, A. & G. Swash, R. J. Waters *et al.*).

1981 Yorkshire, West Allerton Water, ♀, 19th to 20th May (*Brit. Birds* 75: 497), locality was Allerton Bywater.

1983 Durham Cowshill, ♀, 2nd August (B. Armstrong).

(East Europe and south from Siberia) The poorest total since 1971, even allowing for a Norfolk record (at Holme) which is still in circulation.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* (0, 2, 0)

1981 Humberside Patrington, second-calendar-year, freshly dead, late October (J. & T. R. Greensides per J. R. Mather); skin retained by T. R. Greensides.

(Mediterranean and northwest African coasts) Found feet-up in a cabbage patch, this second British record vaguely coincides with other European extralimitals: in Poland in 1982, in Sweden in 1983 and in Bulgaria in 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 273; 77: 588).

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 73, 3)

Orkney Graemsay, at least 27th January (M. Gray, E. R. Meek *et al.*). Rendall and Evie, Mainland, second-calendar-year ♀, 22nd to 23rd April (M. Gray, E. R. Meek, P. Reynolds).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Also, one at Lough Foyle, Co. Derry, on 6th and 7th October. Three typical records. This falcon is currently averaging three or four a year, and has missed only one year (1969) since 1958.

Little Crane *Porzana parva* (68, 28, 0)

1983 Devon Lundy, ♀, 17th April (J. Heath, K. E. Mortimer).

(Central and East Europe and West Asia) Found wandering around on Lundy's 'Puffin slope', this bizarre record was superbly documented by some excellent photographs. A typically early spring vagrant: this was the seventh March/April record since 1958.

Crane *Grus grus* (many, 1,017, 44)

Borders Near St Boswell's, immature, 1st to late May (H. B. McKerchar); probably same, near Grantshouse, 11th June, possibly since 4th (S. R. & Mrs C. E. Warman). Burnmouth, adult, 2nd June (F. Evans). Hule Moss, adult, 4th to 9th September (Prof. W. H. R. Lumsden).

Cornwall St Columb Major, 3rd to 4th December 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 520), presumed same, 4th to 15th January (S. M. Christophers *et al.*). Rame Head, 28th April (A. H. J. Harrop).

Cumbria South Walney, 5th October (T. Dean, Mrs J. Robinson-Dean).

Devon Morthoe area, 25th April to about end May (R. E. Lewis *et al.*).

Dorset Harley Down, 26th April (Dr M. F. & Mrs J. W. Holt).

Dumfries & Galloway Gatehouse of Fleet area, 6th to 12th April (D. M. Hawker *et al.*).

Dyfed Llanddewi Brefi, adult and first-winter, 23rd December 1983 to at least 18th January (*Brit. Birds* 77: 520), both, Pembrey, near Llanelli, 26th January (G. Hall, C. Weekes); adult found shot about 28th, later died, now in Carmarthen Museum; first-winter remained Pembrey 26th to 29th (R. A. D. Hughes *et al.*).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, three, 7th April (R. W. Russell, M. G. W. Terry, F. M. Voysey); same, Emsworth, 7th (R. Boatsen, T. A. Jackson).

Humberside Messingham, 6th September (A. & S. Jaques); presumed same, Broomfleet, 7th (T. Dixon), near Spurn, 7th, 8th (M. L. Denton, J. M. Pinder *et al.*), Sunk Island, 8th (per W. F. Curtis).

Kent High Halstow, five, 3rd April (R. Moore per A. Parker); same, Dungeness, 3rd (W. Rance, D. Sutton). Dungeness, 14th April (S. P. Clancy); another, 25th (A. Thorpe *et al.*). Westbere, 18th April (A. C. B. Henderson). Sandwich Bay, 14th to 15th May (D. Beadle *et al.*); another, 30th (D. Kelly); presumed same, North Foreland, 30th (M. P. Sutherland), Foreness, 30th (M. H. Davies, F. Solly).

Norfolk East coast and Broads area, up to four present for most of year (per G. E. Dunmore); one or other of same, Great Hockham and other localities, 1st to 23rd April (G. Jessup, D. White *et al.*), but adult found dead, Mundesley, 7th (per P. R. Allard). Weybourne, two, 1st June (M. A. Beevers), possibly migrants.

Northumberland Hallington Reservoir, 1st to 3rd April (D. & Miss J. Gardner-Medwin). Budle Bay, 12th September (D. G. Bell).

Orkney Sanday, two, 27th to 31st March (A. Cormack, J. E. Crossley, I. Peace *et al.*).

Suffolk Kessingland, 2nd May (J. R. Read); another, 16th (S. Abbott, A. W. G. Swash), probably from Norfolk Broads area above.

Sussex, East Beachy Head, five, 5th April (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

Sussex, West Adur Levels, 29th April to 9th May (A. J. Prater *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Cleadon Hills, four, 4th April (G. K. Gordon *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Wheldrake Ings, 19th May (D. Waudby).

1982 Greater Manchester Near Rochdale, two, 31st October (*Brit. Birds* 77: 520), first-named observer was L. C. Cook not Mrs L. C. Cook.

1982 Kent Dungeness, two, 30th October (R. K. Coles), another 40, also 30th (P. J. Makepeace per P. J. Grant). Lydd, 14, also 30th (R. K. Coles); all additional to those already published (*Brit. Birds* 76: 491).

1983 Cornwall Nanquidno, 23rd October (B. King). St Columb Major, 3rd to 4th December (*Brit. Birds* 77: 520), see Cornwall above.

1983 Dyfed Llanddewi Brefi, 23rd December to 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 520), see Dyfed above.

1983 Greater Manchester Chat Moss, 13th February to 13th March (B. T. Shaw *et al.*).

1983 Humberside Ellerton, 19th April (T. J. Barker).

1983 Kent Stodmarsh, 5th December (D. Painter).

1983 Orkney Birsay, 30th April to 18th May (*Brit. Birds* 77: 520), was adult; that at Tankerness and Holm area was first-year (E. R. Meek *et al.*).

(North and central Eurasia, locally south to Turkey) Also, seven on the North Slob, Co. Wexford, on 1st December. The late records for the 1982 invasion bring that year's total of new arrivals to 201. The annual average for the ten years 1965 to 1974 was six, but the corresponding figure from 1975 to 1984 (excluding 1982) was 28. This year's total of new arrivals was bettered only in the 1963 and 1982 invasions.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 79, 8)

Grampian Ythan Estuary, first-winter, 14th October (I. Macleod); same, Meikle Loch, 20th October to 3rd November (R. Proctor *et al.*); remains found, Cotehill Loch, mid November (per Dr M. V. Bell).

Gwynedd Bardsey, two, 29th April (B. Henshaw, N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

Hertfordshire Chandler's Cross, two, 7th May (Mr & Mrs P. A. Williams *et al.*), presumed same as Surrey individuals.

Merseyside Marshside Marsh, 28th April (B. & N. F. Hunt).

Surrey Perry Oaks Sewage-works, two, 8th to 9th May (F. R. Cannings *et al.*), presumed same as Hertfordshire individuals.

Sussex, East Boreham Street, two, 12th to 18th May (R. & Mrs D. Harris, M. & M. J. Scott-Ham *et al.*).

1983 Cambridgeshire Nene Washes, discontinuously, 7th to 14th May, subsequently nested, but eggs stolen, probably by fox *Vulpes vulpes*; last seen 14th June (M. R. Coates, R. L. K. Jolliffe, S. Rook *et al.*).

1983 Cheshire Frodsham, 3rd May (J. C. Eyre), additional to two, 2nd to 3rd (*Brit. Birds* 77: 521).

1983 Humberside Blacktoft Sands, two, 12th May (A. Grieve, D. Page *et al.*).

(Southern Eurasia, Africa and Australia) It seems highly likely that the 1983 Cornish and Cheshire trio were the same and that two of these subsequently went on to provide Britain's second-ever breeding attempt on the Nene Washes. The previous nesting involved two pairs in Nottingham in 1945. The 1984 records produced a similar statistical headache: could the two Bardsey birds have returned southeastwards via Hertfordshire, Surrey and East Sussex?

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* (27, 5, 1)

Essex Hadleigh Marsh, first-winter, 29th September to 2nd October (P. M. Griggs, A. R. Perkins, C. W. Todd *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 77: plate 264; 78: plates 251-254).

251-254. First-winter Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*, Essex, September 1984 (Tom Croucher)



(Southwest Asia, and North and East Africa) Apart from a one-day bird in Cornwall in 1980, this was the first since the famous long-staying 1969 Norfolk individual. Judging by its 'moth-eaten' plumage and the semi-permanent clod of earth on the tip of its bill, an Essex field was a poor substitute for the Sahara Desert.

Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* or *G. nordmanni* (36, 65, 1)

Cambridgeshire Grafham Water, 12th August (R. F. Porter).

(South Europe to West Asia and Africa) No positively identified pratincoles for the first time since 1979. The totals include those specifically identified.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* (9, 29, 3)

Berkshire Holyport, Maidenhead, 25th to 26th February (E. E. Green, Mrs R. Lister, I. M. Walker *et al.*).

Greater London Beddington Sewage-works, 31st January to 1st February (G. Messenbird).

Strathclyde Portencross, Ayr, 21st January (C. Campbell).

1983 Lothian Bo'ness, 16th to at least 30th January (*Brit. Birds* 77: 521), still present 17th March (M. J. Gibson, A. M. Stoddart).

(North America, West Indies, Peru to Chile) Also, one at Ballymacoda, Co. Cork, from 15th February to 24th March (*Brit. Birds* 77: plate 75). Apart from a blank year in 1977, Killdeers have been annual since 1974, with an average of two a year. The Greater London and Berkshire individuals have been treated as one in the totals.

Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (6, 87, 12)

All records apparently related to the North American race *P. d. dominica*.

Cornwall Sennen, adult, 2nd to 28th October (D. S. Flumm, M. P. Semmens *et al.*). St Just, juvenile, 18th November (A. H. J. Harrop, H. Taffs).

Humberside Easington, adult, 15th to 18th September (A. Cawthrow, J. Hewitt, J. M. Turton *et al.*). See Nottinghamshire below.

Kent Oakhamness Islands, Medway, adult, 22nd July (T. E. Bowley, T. Laws *et al.*).

Merseyside Marshside Marsh, Southport (formerly Lancashire), first-winter, 12th to 13th November (Miss J. M. Coates, S. J. & Mrs J. A. Riley).

Nottinghamshire Idle Stop and Misson area, adult, at least 8th to 9th September (J. R. Coleman *et al.*), presumed same as Humberside individual above.

255. Adult Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, Scilly, September-October 1984 (Dave Sadler)



Scilly St Agnes, adult, 13th September to 4th October (J. I. Blincow, J. Gale *et al.*) (plate 255).
St Agnes, first-winter, 31st October to 2nd November (G. P. Gill *et al.*); presumed same, St Mary's, 2nd to at least 3rd November (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 78: plate 54).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 17th October (M. S. Cavanagh, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

Somerset Stoke and Tealham Moors and Cheddar Reservoir, adult, 4th to 26th October (T. A. Box, D. L. Buckingham, B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Dorman's Pool and Reclamation Pond, juvenile, 23rd August to 4th October (T. Francis *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South Wath Ings, adult, 18th July (J. M. Turton).

1983 Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, first-winter, 14th October (*Brit. Birds* 77: 521), to at least 13th November (per S. M. Christophers).

1983 Gwynedd Cemlyn Bay, Anglesey, 3rd April (R. P. Cockbain *et al.*).

1983 Western Isles Peninerine, South Uist, adult, 2nd to 6th August (Miss S. Alliez, M. J. Crosby).

(North America and Northeast Asia) There is also a late 1983 record of one at Rahasane Turlough, Co. Galway, on 23rd August (additional to the September record already published, *Brit. Birds* 77: 522). Twelve represents a new peak for this species, which, over the last decade, has averaged seven a year. It seems conceivable that the April bird in Gwynedd had wintered here undetected, but, although there are 11 November records, only one midwinter record has ever been accepted (at Caerlaverock, Dumfries & Galloway, in 1974/75, *Brit. Birds* 71: 499).

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* (5, 19, 1)

Glamorgan, West Mouth of River Neath (Nedd), 20th to 21st October (R. E. Harbird, I. F. Tew *et al.*).

(Southeast Russia and west-central Asia) This eye-catching plover was recorded 16 times between 1968 and 1980, but this was the first since then. The most remarkable aspect of this record was the fact that the above observers had actually been fantasising about finding a Sociable Plover shortly before their discovery: obviously a touch of ESP (Extra Sociable Plover).

White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura* (0, 2, 2)

Shropshire Locality withheld, 24th to at least 25th May (J. Sankey, P. R. Swales).

Tyne & Wear Cleadon, 21st May (B. S. Bates, D. A. T. Constantine, T. I. Mills *et al.*).

(South Russia and Middle East, and west-central Asia) The previous records were in Warwickshire in July 1975 and in Dorset in July 1979. As in 1975, the ones in Britain were matched by others on the Continent: there were two records in the Netherlands in June and July 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 588). There must be a distinct possibility, however, that only one wandering individual was involved in total.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 35, 8)

Cornwall St John's Lake, juvenile, 19th to 23rd September (A. E. C. Aston, S. C. Madge).

Kent Elmley, adult, 21st to 23rd July (M. C. Buckland *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, juvenile, at least 30th September to at least 7th October (P. J. Grant *et al.*).

1978 Cornwall Hayle, juvenile, date uncertain between 11th and 16th October (N. R. Phillips).

1983 Devon Lundy, juvenile, 3rd to 4th September (R. Campey, K. E. Mortimer, S. Wing *et al.*).

(North America) There were five juveniles in Ireland: two at Rosslare

Back Strand, Co. Wexford, from 9th to 17th September; two at Blennerville, Co. Kerry, on 16th September; and one at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, on 18th and 19th September. Eight is a new peak, but yet again most were in Ireland, where Tacumshin recorded its fifth in five years.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* (1, 6, 0)

1969 Scilly Tresco, adult, 19th August (R. F. Coomber, the late D. B. Hunt, the late P. Z. Mackenzie), previously rejected as Semipalmated Sandpiper *C. pusilla* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 500).

(North America) Re-examination of the photographs in the light of current knowledge showed this bird to be a classic moulting adult Western, the fourth ever. The last fully acceptable record was as long ago as 1975.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* (0, 1, 0)

1982 Cleveland Saltholme Pool, juvenile, 28th August to 1st September (J. B. Dunnett, T. Francis, R. T. McAndrew *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 75: plates 215-217; 78: plate 275).

(Disjunct in forest zone of Siberia) The only previous European record was in Sweden in October-November 1977 (*Vår Fågelvärld* 37: 333-338). This superbly confiding stint afforded wader enthusiasts an excellent opportunity to sort out some of the species' subtle identification features and, occurring at the same time as Britain's first Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus*, provided a truly purple patch for rarity enthusiasts.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* (6, 19, 3)

Kent Dungeness, adult, 18th to at least 25th August (P. J. Grant, S. McMinn *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 77: plate 242), possibly same as East Sussex individual.

Sussex, East Pett Pools, adult, 28th July (P. J. Grant *et al.*).

1983 Cornwall College Reservoir, juvenile, 3rd to 9th September (B. Cave, Dr G. W. Davis *et al.*).

(North America) Coincidentally, there was also an adult in Ireland, at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 9th to 15th August. Anyone who finds two Least and a 'SemiP' in one autumn can perhaps be considered unduly lucky, but the tenacity with which P. J. Grant has tackled the enormous problems of stint identification has quite clearly been well rewarded. The crippled Kentish bird and the one in East Sussex have been treated as two separate individuals, but there must remain at least a slender possibility that only one was involved. After a gap of four years, there have now been five records in the last two.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 222, 23)

Cheshire Frodsham, adult, 2nd July to 23rd August (P. A. Ardron, P. R. Brash, J. R. Hough *et al.*).

Clwyd Shotton Pools, adult, 30th July to at least 8th August (E. J. Abraham *et al.*).

Cumbria Hodbarrow, adult, 1st to 2nd August (R. I. Kinley, D. B. Thexton *et al.*). South Walney, adult, 7th October (J. V. Bhalerao, J. R. C. Dakin *et al.*).

Essex Two Tree Island, adult, 2nd to 4th September (M. Rowbottom, P. M. Griggs, R. Howard *et al.*).

Hampshire Farlington Marshes, adult, 27th to 28th August (G. C. Stephenson *et al.*). Warsash, juvenile, 12th October (D. A. Christie).

Kent Grain, age uncertain, 16th to at least 17th September (A. Parker, J. E. Tilbrook, B. Wright *et al.*); another, age uncertain, 30th September to 2nd October (T. E. Bowley, M. C. Buckland, D. W. Taylor *et al.*).

Lancashire Conder Green, adult, 14th to 15th July (P. & P. G. Slade *et al.*).

Merseyside Seaforth Dock Pools, adult, 19th August (D. Messenger, M. G. Pennington, R. C. Wilcox *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell, adult, 23rd to 30th July (A. & B. Goodey, I. Rowlands *et al.*). Snettisham, adult, 27th to 28th July (A. Banwell, N. Bostock *et al.*), not same as Titchwell individual.

Somerset West Huntspill, adult, 29th July to 16th August (B. J. Hill, B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

Staffordshire Tittesworth Reservoir, adult, 6th to 7th July (P. G. Barratt, T. E. Gibson, A. Sherlock *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, adult, 28th July to 8th August (S. Callaghan, T. D. Charlton *et al.*); adult, 12th to 18th September (G. J. Carey, T. D. Charlton, B. D. Gee *et al.*).

Surrey Perry Oaks Sewage-farm, adult, 30th July to 12th August; presumed same, Staines Reservoirs, 18th (R. B. Hastings *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Wallsend, adult, 7th August (J. D. Holding *et al.*).

1980 Kent Cliffe, age uncertain, 18th October (*Brit. Birds* 74: 468), again 22nd (I. J. Andrews).

1983 Humberside Blacktoft Sands, adult, 10th to 14th July (B. Grant, A. Grieve, D. Page *et al.*). Melbourne, juvenile, 26th September (T. J. Barker, T. E. Dixon).

1983 Norfolk Breydon Water, adult, 14th July (P. R. Allard).

1983 Scilly Bryher, age uncertain, 24th October (R. I. Allison, P. F. Fawkes, M. J. Palmer *et al.*).



256. Adult White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, Co. Cork, July 1984 (Richard T. Mills)

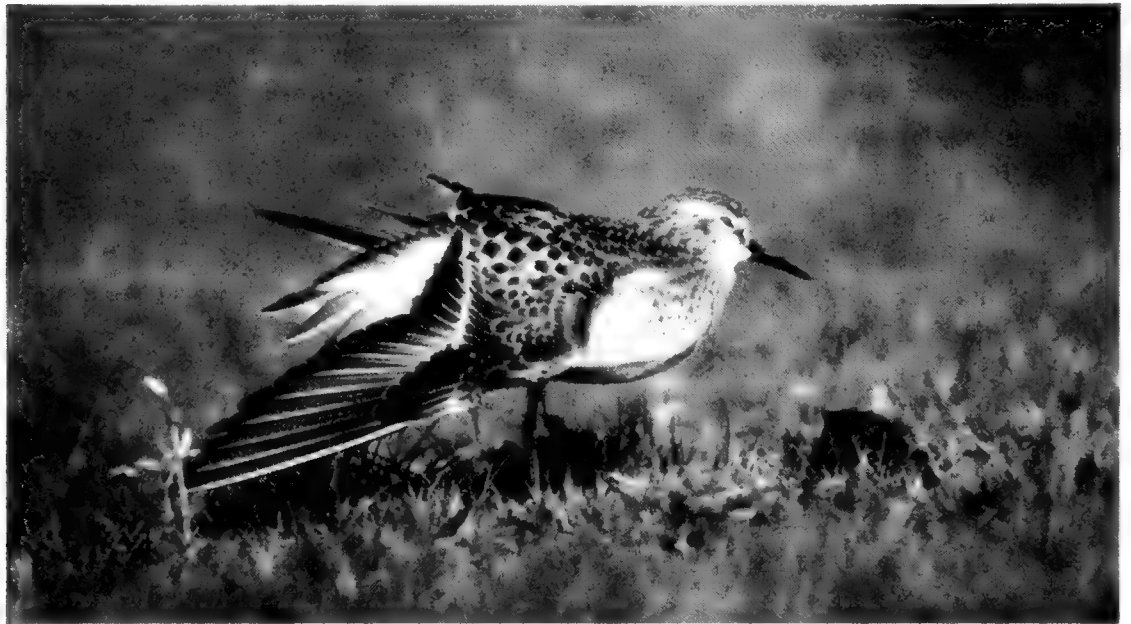
(North America) There were also four in Ireland: an adult at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 15th and 16th July (plate 256), and a first-summer there from 3rd August to 1st September; one at Rahasane Turlough, Co. Galway, from 15th to 18th October; and one at Lough Beg, Co. Derry, on 21st October. This species shows some very interesting occurrence patterns, and this year's bumper crop, bettered only by 25 in 1980, raises some intriguing questions. A quick analysis of the records since 1958 reveals a distinct double peak: adults in early August and, presumably, mainly juveniles in early October. Some 68% of July and 47% of August records involved adults on the East Coast and these presumably relate in part to birds which have crossed the Atlantic in previous years. The five in 1984, for example, follow on from a marked late-autumn influx into western Britain and Ireland in 1983. Could it be, however, that other

late summer records, particularly those in northwestern England, involved individuals which had made a deliberate transatlantic crossing, from northeast Canada or Greenland, with other waders such as Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula* and Dunlins *Calidris alpina*? Most later ones, in October and November, are presumably genuine storm-driven vagrants, as 68% of records at that time come from Irish or western British localities, compared with only 22% from the East Coast. Obviously this is a subject worthy of more detailed study.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (5, 105, 5)

Cornwall Siblyback Reservoir, juvenile, 26th to 29th September (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown, T. Miller *et al.*).

Dyfed Dale, juvenile, 15th September to at least 1st October (N. A. Lethaby, J. S. Rowe, A. F. Silcocks *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 77: plate 265; 78: plate 257).



257. Juvenile Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Dyfed, October 1984 (Howard Nicholls)

Lothian Gladhouse Reservoir, juvenile, 8th September (R. W. J. Smith, Dr L. L. J. Vick).

1982 Grampian Rattray Head, juvenile, 26th September (C. R. McKay, L. Steele).

(North America and northeast Siberia) Two in Ireland: a juvenile at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, on 15th September; and one at Knockaderry Reservoir, Co. Waterford, on 30th September and 1st October. Some typical records; the average for the last ten years has been six.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 58, 8)

Gwynedd Malltraeth, Anglesey, 4th to 6th June (T. Gravett, D. Sadler *et al.*).

Kent Pegwell Bay, two, 23rd to 28th May (D. Beadle, F. Solly *et al.*); presumed one of same, Sandwich Bay, 31st (J. McAllister).

Lincolnshire Northcoates Point, 29th May (H. Bunn).

Lothian Aberlady Bay, 25th to at least 29th May; another, at least 2nd June (A. Barr, A. Brown, P. R. Gordon *et al.*).

Norfolk Breydon Water, 18th to 22nd May (P. R. Allard *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Ditchford Gravel-pits, 25th to 26th June (S. P. Fisher, S. G. Page, A. S. Vials *et al.*).

1982 Norfolk Cley, 26th to 27th May (*Brit. Birds* 76: 494), also 28th (M. J. Palmer).

1983 Lothian Aberlady Bay (*Brit. Birds* 77: 523), first individual stayed to 15th June (per A. Brown). Tynninghame, 15th June (D. J. Bates *et al.*), additional to Aberlady individuals.

1983 Norfolk Titchwell, 10th September (D. J. Britton *et al.*).

(North Eurasia) The two late 1983 records take that year's total to a record eight, equalled in 1984. The remarkable upsurge since 1982 has been maintained, and the recurrence of two at Aberlady Bay is particularly noteworthy. Inland records, such as the one in Northamptonshire are especially unusual.

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* (1, 13, 1)

Cheshire Frodsham, first-summer, 16th to 28th April (G. Lightfoot, J. Rayner, J. C. Weldrick *et al.*), and various northwest Cheshire localities to 26th May and from 7th July; last seen, Frodsham, 3rd October (per S. W. Holmes) (*Brit. Birds* 77: plates 128-129).

(North America) The first in Britain since 1976, although singles were seen in Ireland in 1979 and 1983, as well as recent records in Finland, Spain and Belgium (*Brit. Birds* 78: 342). Always highly sought after, this year's exceptionally long-staying individual was widely appreciated. All the previous records were in autumn, apart from one in 1970 at Dornoch, Sutherland, on the similar date of 18th April.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* (33, 411, —)

(North America) No longer considered by the Committee, but one at Garretstown, Co. Cork, on 20th September 1982, took that year's total to 27.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (180, 49, 2)

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, first-winter, 24th August (Rev. R. J. Abraham); presumed same, 15th to 18th September (G. P. Catley, B. M. Clarkson *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, juvenile or first-winter, 6th September to 3rd October (D. Coates, P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Northwest Asia) Late August to October has produced about three-fifths of all the records since 1958, with a peak in September.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 81, 6)

Gloucestershire Frampton and Slimbridge, age uncertain, 12th October to 14th December (D. B. Paynter *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, first-winter, 30th September (S. McMinn *et al.*).

Orkney Kirkwall, first-winter, 26th to 27th October (J. L. Hogarth, E. R. Meek *et al.*).

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, first-winter, 17th to 18th September (M. J. Helps, A. R. Kitson, P. R. Moore).

1979 Hampshire Farlington Marshes, 5th to 12th May (J. H. Marchant, W. Nelson, P. M. Potts *et al.*).

1983 Essex Old Hall Marshes, adult, 17th to at least 31st July (C. J. Mackenzie-Grieve *et al.*).

1983 Warwickshire Draycote Water, age uncertain, 10th November (R. C. Mays).

1983 Yorkshire, North Filey, adult, 2nd August (P. J. Dunn, I. Forsyth, H. J. Whitehead *et al.*).

(North America and Northeast Siberia) Three in Ireland: the long-staying adult at Ballycotton, Co. Cork (one of two first recorded in October 1980), remained until 28th March; a first-winter at Swords, Co. Dublin, from 6th to 11th October; and one at Lough Beg, Co. Derry, on 21st October. A typical year: the annual average for the last ten years has been seven.

Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* or *L. griseus* (31, 179, 8)

Tayside Port Allen, 10th to 11th and 19th October (E. J. Maguire).

1983 Norfolk Hickling, 24th to 26th October (S. E. Linsell *et al.*).

(North America and Northeast Siberia) In Ireland, one at Lissagriffin, Co. Cork, on 5th October; and a late record of one at Lough O'Donnell, Co. Clare, on 5th October 1983. The above totals include those specifically identified.

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* (0, 1, 0)

1983 Humberside Blacktoft Sands, 26th April to 6th May (A. Grieve, D. Page *et al.*), presumed returning individual of September/October 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 496).

(North America) Assuming this to have been the bird originally involved in the 1981 sightings, it seems peculiar that it has not been picked up elsewhere.

Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus* (0, 1, 0)

1982 Glamorgan, Mid Sker, 30th August to 6th September (*Brit. Birds* 76: 496), second named observer was D. E. J. Dicks, not Ricks.

(Central and Northeast Siberia)

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (15, 22, 1)

Scilly St Martin's, 23rd to 27th October (R. V. A. Marshall *et al.*).

(North America) The third consecutive year that one has appeared on Scilly.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 33, 8)

Avon Blagdon and Chew Valley Lakes, juvenile, 20th to 27th August (L. A. Tucker, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*), also seen Somerset.

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, 30th April to 8th May (J. S. Kirby, O. R. Marks *et al.*).

Essex Fisher's Green, 28th April (J. Fitzpatrick, G. J. White *et al.*), also seen Hertfordshire.

Grampian Lossiemouth, 20th to 23rd April (R. H. Dennis, N. Elkins, C. Gervaise *et al.*).

Hertfordshire Broxbourne, 28th April (G. J. White *et al.*), same as Essex individual.

Kent Elmley, at least 23rd April (P. N. Collin *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell, 25th May (R. Henry, F. McLaughlin); same, Holme, 26th to 29th (J. R. Allan, V. Eve, G. F. Hibberd *et al.*). Cley, adult, 16th August to at least 3rd September (N. C. Machin, J. P. Martin, T. Smith *et al.*).

Somerset Cheddar Reservoir, juvenile, 20th August (T. A. Box), same as Avon individual.

(Southeast Europe, and West and East Asia; has recently bred in Finland) Ireland had its second in 1984: an adult at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, on 4th and 5th August, almost exactly two years after the first at the same locality—could it have been the same bird returning? Over the last ten years, the annual average has been just over three, with a previous peak of six in 1979. The remarkable upsurge continues and corresponds with recent increases in Sweden, Finland and France (*Brit. Birds* 76: 568; 78: 342). The April records are particularly unusual, but it seems conceivable that those in Kent, Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire related to just one northward-moving individual.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 143, 6)

Avon Avonmouth, juvenile, at least 30th September to 5th October (A. J. Merritt, H. E. Rose, G. Youdale *et al.*).

Dyfed Bosherton Ponds, juvenile, 7th to 22nd October (R. J. Haycock, D. Little *et al.*).

Greater London Beddington Sewage-works, juvenile, 24th to at least 30th September (G. Messenbird *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Covenham Reservoir, 20th May (K. Robinson).

Norfolk Snettisham, adult, 28th August (A. J. Mackay).

Shetland Scatness, 20th to at least 21st May (A. F. T. & G. Fitchett).

1983 Oxfordshire Banbury Sewage-farm, first-winter, 2nd to 18th December (T. G. Easterbrook, A. Nash, H. Williams *et al.*) (plate 258).



258. First-winter Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, Oxfordshire, December 1983 (T. G. Easterbrook)

1983 Sussex, East Eastbourne, first-winter, 3rd February to 7th April (*Brit. Birds* 77: 526), last seen 9th (R. A. Hargreaves *et al.*).

(North America) The average for the last ten years has been seven, with a peak of 11 in 1981.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (6, 15, 2)

Hertfordshire Tring Reservoirs, juvenile, 5th to at least 12th October (R. Hudson, S. Wilson *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, juvenile, 8th to 14th October; same, Tresco, 19th (D. Gibbs *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 78: plate 33).

(North America) Two fairly typical records of one of our more erratic American visitors.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (3, 19, 1)

Hampshire Langstone Harbour, 23rd May (D. J. Radford).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia) A red-letter day for the above observer, who had earlier found a Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 64, 2)

Devon Tavy Estuary, first-winter, 4th November to at least 6th January 1985 (P. J. Barden, A. W. G. John, R. Smaldon *et al.*).

Strathclyde Loch Indaal, Islay, 5th June (A. McNeil).

1983 Cornwall Drift Reservoir, juvenile, 22nd September to at least 13th November (*Brit. Birds* 77: 527), last seen 3rd December (L. P. Williams).

1983 Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, age uncertain, 4th September (G. C. Bond, J. Miller).
(North America) The poorest showing since 1973.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 158, 14)

Cambridgeshire Grafham Water, first-winter, 7th to at least 9th October (I. J. N. Nicholls, R. F. Porter). Ouse Washes, age uncertain, 29th October to at least 3rd November (A. J. A. Dally, Dr F. K. Hammond, M. S. Peck *et al.*).

Cheshire Frodsham, first-winter, 1st September (Dr W. N. Brooks, A. R. & C. Davies, M. R. Gough *et al.*).

Dorset Radipole and Lodmoor, ♀, 2nd July to 5th August (M. Cade, C. Condell *et al.*).

Grampian Cotehill Loch, age uncertain, 17th to 22nd September (G. F. Bell, Miss A. Nicol, A. Stalker *et al.*).

Hampshire Paulsgrove, Portsmouth, first-winter, 18th October (T. Jennings, W. Percy).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, first-winter, 11th September to 5th October (T. Hiscock, D. J. Ridgley *et al.*); probably same, Anderby Creek, 3rd October (K. Atkin, K. Wilson).

Somerset Steart, first-winter, 13th October (T. Foard, B. D. Gibbs); same, West Huntspill, 16th to 26th (B. J. Hill, B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

Strathclyde Hillend Reservoir, age uncertain, 10th October (Dr J. N. Darroch, J. Middleton).

Sussex, East Rye, ♀, 30th June to 1st July (B. H. Beck, Dr B. J. Yates *et al.*).

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, adult, 12th October (C. M. & Mrs B. James, G. C. D. James, P. W. Maton *et al.*) (plate 259).

1982 Clwyd Connah's Quay, adult, 5th September (B. C. Forrester *et al.*).

1983 Humberside Blacktoft Sands, ♀, 23rd June (A. Grieve, D. Page *et al.*), probably same as Norfolk individual below.

1983 Norfolk Titchwell, ♀, 25th June to 2nd July (C. I. Bushell, G. N. Wilkins *et al.*). Presumed same, Cley, 3rd to 17th July (D. & Mrs J. Dell *et al.*). These and the Humberside sighting all probably relate to the Minsmere, Suffolk, individual of 6th to at least 8th June (*Brit. Birds* 77: 528).

(North America) Three in Ireland: single juveniles at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, on 10th and 11th August and from 31st August to 30th September; and at Lough Beg, Co. Derry, on 29th September. Also, a late record of one at Kinsale Marsh, Co. Cork, on 29th August 1983. Ten or 11 has been the average for the last ten years, and 14 was bettered only by 19 in 1979 and 17 in 1980. It does seem possible, however, that some duplication was involved in the above records, particularly the ones in East Sussex and Dorset. The first Tacumshin individual was remarkably early for a juvenile.

259. Adult Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, West Sussex, October 1984 (P. W. Maton)



Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* (5, 0, 0)

1966 Man Calf of Man, 21st May (*Brit. Birds* 60: 320), now considered not acceptable after review.

(Southern Russia, West and Central Asia) The last accepted record was at Hove, East Sussex, on 9th August 1932, and this striking gull is now set for relegation to Category B. Thorough review of all the old records would, however, also seem sensible.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 33, 7)



260 & 261. Second-winter Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*, Humberside, November 1984
(Graham P. Catley)



Cumbria Kent Estuary, first-summer, 27th May (P. J. Marsh *et al.*); presumed same, High Foulshaw, now second-winter, 14th August (A. F. Gould).

Devon Axe Estuary, first-winter, 6th January (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown).

Humberside East Park, Hull, first-summer, 16th April (P. Coupland); presumed same, now second-winter, 9th November to 1985 (K. Rotherham, A. Wrighton *et al.*) (plates 260 & 261); same, Barton-on-Humber, 28th December (G. P. Catley); also in Lincolnshire below. (*Brit. Birds* 78: plate 66).

Lincolnshire Thorpe-on-Hill, first-summer, 23rd May (K. Durose, A. C. Sims *et al.*); presumed same as Humberside individual.

Tyne & Wear North Shields, first/second-winter, 11th to 12th February (J. D. & P. J. Holding *et al.*); same, Newcastle General Hospital, 27th February to 12th March, 27th to 28th July, 12th September to 1985 (N. J. Watmough *et al.*); same, Seaton Burn, 12th May, 31st August (A. J. Johnston *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 77: plates 73-74).

Yorkshire, North Filey, second-summer, 23rd July (H. J. Whitehead *et al.*).

1982 Gloucestershire Near Frampton-on-Severn, first-year, 2nd January (*Brit. Birds* 76: 498), again, Slimbridge, 3rd (P. Bristow, N. Odin, M. C. Powell *et al.*).

(North America) Ireland had its third and fourth in 1984: first-years at Cobh, Co. Cork, from 25th to at least 29th January (*Brit. Birds* 77: plates 71 & 72); and in the Dublin Bay area from 10th June to 3rd July. A record showing. It seems odd that three should have been in the Northeast, especially considering the relative paucity of East Coast records of Ring-billed Gull *L. delawarensis*.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 8, 2)

Avon Severn Beach, second-summer/adult, 19th May (P. Bowerman, B. Lancaster).

Cheshire Near Runcorn, adult, 18th January (R. Harrison); presumed same, Frodsham, 27th January (T. Dean, B. Henshaw). See 1983 Lancashire below.

Cornwall Devoran, adult, 22nd June to at least 1st July (P. J. Basterfield, L. P. Williams *et al.*).

Lancashire See 1983 Lancashire below.

1983 Lancashire Martin Mere, Burscough, adult, 29th December to at least 2nd January 1984. Probably that later seen in Cheshire (D. W. Emley, M. R. Green, G. Halfpenny *et al.*).

(North America) This species has now been annual since 1980.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 35, 1)

Gwynedd Bardsey, adult, 6th to 7th November (N. J. & N. R. Phillips, V. E. Wood).

1983 Cornwall Swanpool, Falmouth, adult, 5th March (*Brit. Birds* 77: 529), observer was M. A. Golley not Colley.

(North America) This gull has been recorded in all but two of the last ten years, with an annual average of two. The above observers are no strangers to this species, having been responsible for the discovery of the famous Cornish adult which returned to St Ives in four consecutive years from 1968 to 1971.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* (0, 264, 84)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult, 8th April (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Berkshire Reading, first-summer, 23rd March; adult, 2nd April (A. J. Croucher).

Cornwall Marazion, first-winter, 21st to 31st December 1983, then Drift Reservoir, January 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 529), Drift Reservoir, 1st January, later found moribund, died in care, 5th February (per S. M. Christophers). Hayle, first-winter, 15th February (D. S. Flumm, L. P. Williams); second-winter, 24th March (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown, D. S. Flumm); first-winter moulting first-summer, 25th March to 26th May, also at Marazion (D. S. Flumm *et al.*); first-winter, 19th April (D. S. Flumm *et al.*); first-winter, 7th December to at least January 1985 (D. S. Flumm *et al.*). Porthleven, adult, 3rd March (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown). Drift

Reservoir, first-winter, 25th to 30th April; same, Penzance and Marazion shore, 3rd to 4th May (S. M. Christophers, D. S. Flumm, H. P. K. Robinson). Swan Pool, Falmouth, first-winter, 18th February and 4th March (R. I. Allison, J. F. Babbington, R. Crossley *et al.*). Par Beach, first-winter, 11th and 25th to 27th December 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 529), to 7th April (per S. M. Christophers); first-winter, 8th December to at least January 1985 (S. C. & Mrs P. S. Madge *et al.*). East Looe River, second-winter moulting second-summer, 11th March (S. C. Madge *et al.*).

Cumbria South Walney, second-summer, 15th to 18th April (T. Dean, R. I. Kinley, Miss J. C. Robinson *et al.*).

Devon River Plym, first-winter, 7th January (J. C. Nicholls). Slapton and Start Bay, first-winter, 12th March (J. C. Nicholls *et al.*). West Hoe, Plymouth, second-winter moulting second-summer, 25th March (R. Crossley). Warleigh Point area, River Tamar, first-winter, 24th December (J. C. Nicholls).

Dorset Radipole, adult, 28th December 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 530), again 4th to 5th February (M. Cade, G. Walbridge *et al.*); adult, 24th February to 8th March (M. Cade *et al.*); second-winter, 8th November to at least 31st December; adult, 26th November to at least 31st December; adult, 30th December (M. Cade, J. F. Ryan *et al.*). Weymouth Bay, probable adult, 7th February (P. G. Akers, M. Cade, D. J. Chown), additional to Radipole individuals. West Bexington, adult, 21st December (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown, M. A. Hallett), same as Radipole individual. Poole Park, adult, 25th January (P. V. Harvey). Stanpit Marsh, first-winter moulting first-summer, 14th May (D. N. Smith).

Dyfed, Aberystwyth, two, possibly three adults: single sightings, 1st to 5th March, 7th to 8th, 11th, 13th, 15th, two 29th (A. D. Fox); one of same, 3rd April (J. McLoughlin, S. Rooke *et al.*); first-year, 7th March; second-summer, 22nd March (A. D. Fox).

Glamorgan, South Roath Park Lane, adult, 12th to 25th February (K. R. Lloyd *et al.*). Rhymney Estuary, first-summer moulting second-winter, 14th July (M. C. Powell *et al.*), also in Gwent below.

Glamorgan, West Blackpill, at least nine adults: 2nd to 4th March; another 7th (R. H. Davies); 14th to 17th April, two, 14th to 16th (R. H. Davies, S. Murray); 16th March to 17th April (P. & S. Murray, I. F. Tew); 20th to 22nd March (R. H. Davies); 27th March to 3rd April (R. H. Davies, I. F. Tew); 18th April (R. H. Davies, C. Evans, R. H. A. Taylor); 2nd October (R. H. Davies). Kenfig Pool and Sker Point, first-winter, 4th to 5th December (N. Odin *et al.*).

Gwent Landegfedd Reservoir, Pontypool, adult, 19th to 29th February (P. A. Dean, C. Jones *et al.*). Peterstone Wentloog, adult, 16th April (C. Jones, N. Odin *et al.*). Sluice Farm, first-summer moulting second-winter, 15th to 16th July (M. C. Powell *et al.*), same as South Glamorgan individual of 14th July.

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, first-winter since December 1983 to at least 19th February (D. R. Bishop, R. A. Chapman), see 1983 Hampshire below. Titchfield Haven and Stubbington, adult, 4th to at least 17th February (R. A. Chapman, J. M. Clarke *et al.*).

Lothian Aberlady Bay, first-winter, 4th October (P. R. Gordon).

Merseyside New Brighton, second-summer, 28th June (A. M. Stoddart). Moreton, adult, 15th to 16th July (M. Garner, W. S. Morton *et al.*); adult, 16th to 17th July (E. J. Abraham, M. J. Gibson, S. J. Jones *et al.*); first-summer, 16th July (A. M. Stoddart); adult, 28th July to 1st August (M. S. Garner, W. S. Morton, D. G. Weedon); adult, 30th July (A. M. Stoddart).

Somerset Sutton Bingham Reservoir, adult, 14th March (P. G. Akers, M. A. Hallett).

Strathclyde Lochgilphead, Argyll, adult, 26th March (R. A. Hume).

Sussex, West Weirwood Reservoir, adult, 10th to 20th December (Dr M. R. Howard, D. Shackleton).

1982 Devon Plym Estuary, first-winter, 20th March (R. I. Allison, S. J. Cox *et al.*). Plymouth, second-winter, 13th March to 10th April (*Brit. Birds* 77: 532), also 11th (D. J. Odell).

1982 Gloucestershire Slimbridge, second-winter, 11th January (L. P. Alder, D. G. Riddle, M. Thompson), previously rejected for this date (*Brit. Birds* 77: 582) but accepted for 16th to 30th (*Brit. Birds* 77: 532).

1983 Cheshire Rixton tip, Warrington, first-winter, 12th November (R. Dickinson, J. Jackson, R. Taylor).

1983 Cleveland Redcar, first-summer, 21st July (D. J. Britton).

1983 Cornwall Marazion, first-winter, 21st to 31st December (*Brit. Birds* 77: 529), see Cornwall above.

1983 Dorset Radipole and Lodmoor, adult, 28th December to January 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 530), see Dorset above.

1983 Dyfed Aberystwyth, adult, 10th to 12th January (A. D. Fox, A. P. Fowles *et al.*).

1983 Hampshire Titchfield Haven, first-winter, 26th December (*Brit. Birds* 77: 530), see Hampshire above.

(North America) A total of 31 was recorded in Ireland in 1984, of which 30 were new arrivals: two adults at Limerick City on 10th February; adult at Sligo City on 12th February; two adults at the Lough, Cork, on 23rd February and a first-winter there on 30th December; a first-winter at Sandymount, Co. Dublin, from 25th February to 16th June, two adults there from 22nd March to 21st April, a first-summer from 19th May to 16th June, and another first-summer from 10th June to 17th August, a second-winter from 11th September to 28th December and a first-winter on 31st October; three adults at Galway City from 12th January to 23rd March; adult at Little Island, Cork, on 16th March; adult at Raven Point, Co. Wexford, on 18th March; adult at Ballymacoda, Co. Cork, on 3rd September; adult at Dundalk, Co. Louth, from 23rd to 26th September and a second-winter at Glen Bay, Co. Donegal, on 3rd October. In Northern Ireland, up to three adults (one from 1983) at Belfast Harbour Estate, Co. Down, throughout January until at least 20th March, and again from 10th December into 1985; single adults at Derry City from 20th January to 18th February; at Longfield, Co. Derry, on 17th February; at the Bann Estuary, Co. Derry, on 24th March; and at Newcastle, Co. Down, on 30th December. A late 1983 record involved one (age not given) at Tarbet, Co. Kerry, from 3rd January to 4th April. The records from Northern Ireland in 1981, referred to as 'second-summer' (*Brit. Birds* 75: 508), were first-summer.

A paper analysing the occurrence patterns of this species has recently been published (*Brit. Birds* 78: 327-337). The late records for 1982 and 1983 bring those year's totals to 76 and 89 respectively (there were also 55 in the big influx year of 1981). The 1984 total of new arrivals indicates a levelling off of numbers in the absence of a further large influx of first-years. This year's total of newly arriving first-years was 22 (26% of the total); some 45% of these were in Devon and Cornwall. It is interesting to note that neither of the two main localities, Radipole Lake, Dorset, or Blackpill, West Glamorgan, produced any first-years in 1984, while in Ireland the percentage of first-years was a lower 17%. The series of late summer adults in Merseyside was particularly interesting, as was the early October first-year in Aberlady Bay, Lothian. This was the second such record from this eastern Scottish locality (*Brit. Birds* 77: 530) and it may be the strongest indicator yet that a small breeding population is already established on this side of the Atlantic.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides* (0, 4, 0)

Individuals showing characters of the North American race *L. g. kumlieni*, colloquially known as 'Kumlien's Gull', were recorded as follows:

1982 Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult, 16th April (A. J. Merritt, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

1983 Devon Plymouth, adult, 12th to 16th January (B. R. Field, P. Harrison, R. Smaldon) (plates 262 & 263).



262 & 263. Adult Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* of race *kumlieni*, Devon, January 1983 (B. R. Field)



264. Adult Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* of race *kumlieni*, Shetland, February 1983 (Dennis Coult)

1983 Shetland Lerwick, adult, 4th to 8th February (G. Bashford, C. Byers, M. S. Chapman *et al.*) (plate 264).

(Baffin Island and northwest Ungava Peninsula, Canada) The only previous record was in Co. Kerry in 1958 (*Brit. Birds* 53: 412). It seems possible, however, that this race has been to some extent overlooked, and a number of other records, involving individuals in more problematical

immature plumages, are still under consideration. One wonders whether these might be a prelude to Britain and Ireland's first Thayer's Gull *L. thayeri*.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 39, 2)

Highland See 1983 Highland below.

Norfolk Cley, adult, 9th to 13th May (E. T. Myers *et al.*). Same, Titchwell, 13th to 14th (A. Cawthrow, J. Hewitt, P. D. White *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 77: plate 157).

1983 Highland Thurso, adult, 20th November to 16th May 1984; presumed same, 12th November 1984 to at least 7th January 1985 (S. Laybourne, E. W. E. Maughan *et al.*).

1983 Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, adult, 17th to 20th February (*Brit. Birds* 77: 534), was found by Rosemary Bowman.

(Northeast Siberia, Greenland and Canada) In Ireland, there was an adult at Galway City from 11th January to 4th March; and a late record of a first-winter at Ramore Head, Co. Antrim, on 19th and 20th January 1983. Two other 1983 Irish records are still under consideration. In the light of recent correspondence on the origins of British Glaucous Gulls *Larus hyperboreus* (*Brit. Birds* 77: 165-166; 78: 355-356), it seems plausible that we are also getting Ross's Gulls from two separate sources. Until 1980, 80% of the total of 25 had been in northern Scotland or eastern England, suggesting an Arctic origin from the north or east. The 18 recorded in the last four years represent a remarkable increase, but the percentage occurring in northern Scotland or eastern England has dropped to 50%, the remaining 50% having been in western Britain (two) and in Ireland (seven), compared with only 12% of the previous 24. The recent upsurge in Ross's Gull numbers has not been matched by its Arctic congener, the Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*, and surely the most logical explanation is that we are now receiving Ross's Gulls which have been swept across the Atlantic from the northwest (perhaps from an expanding Arctic Canadian or Greenland population?).

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (53, 169, 1)

Sussex, West Ferring, 26th April (R. J. Sandison).

1983 Norfolk Holme, 11th May (P. R. Clarke).

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colony in Denmark) Another poor showing, no doubt reflecting the current poor state of the Danish breeding population (*BWP*).

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 126, 4)

Dorset Poole Harbour, 28th July (M. A. Hallett, R. Newton).

Kent Dungeness, 29th May (A. Warren).

Surrey Papercourt Gravel-pits, 9th August (J. Beck, T. M. J. Doran, R. Stride *et al.*).

Sussex, East Rye, 9th to 10th July (P. F. Bonham, P. E. Philpot, Dr B. J. Yates).

(Cosmopolitan, except South America, but everywhere local) This species averaged about six a year during the last decade. It has shown a substantial population increase in the Baltic in recent years (*BWP*), although British occurrences have remained remarkably consistent since the mid 1960s.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 5, 1)

Clwyd Point of Air, first-summer, 3rd July to at least 6th August (J. Rayner, C. Rowley *et al.*).

Gwynedd Near Penmon, Anglesey, adult, 30th September to 20th October (M. Donahue, T. Gravett, H. Knott *et al.*).

(North America) Also, a first-year at the Bann Estuary, Co. Derry, from 3rd to 5th December 1983. Another 1984 record, from Co. Down, has still to be ratified by the Irish Records Panel. The remarkable run—since the first in 1980—continues. The Clwyd and Gwynedd individuals have been treated as the same in the totals.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* (3, 5, 1)

Leicestershire Rutland Water, 8th to 9th June (C. P. Lythall, J. Pearson, P. J. Powell *et al.*).

(Oceanic islands from the Caribbean east to the Philippines and Australia) After a long gap from 1958 to 1976, there have now been five in the last eight years. This, the first to be seen inland, was also the first major rarity for this superb new reservoir. Another record, from Lodmoor, Dorset, is still under consideration.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* (16, 9, 1)

Kent, Dungeness, 9th July (S. Bellinger, S. McMinn), also seen in East Sussex.

Sussex, East Rye, 9th July (P. Philpott, Dr B. J. Yates) (plate 265), same as Kent individual.

(Tropical and subtropical islands in all oceans, also Red Sea) A typical record, but the first since 1980.



265. Adult Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*, East Sussex, July 1984 (B. J. Yates)

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (20, 59, 2)

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, 2nd June (E. D. Lloyd).

1969 Hampshire (Wight) Newtown Estuary, Isle of Wight, adult, 26th September (*Brit. Birds* 63: 280), now considered on photographic evidence to have been first-winter Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*.

(South Eurasia, Northwest, East and Southern Africa, and Australia) There was also an adult at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 4th to 15th August (plate 276), the first Irish record since 1970. A return to normal after the high total of eight in 1983.



266 & 267. Juvenile White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Kent, September 1984 (M. Scott-Ham)

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 435, 18)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult, 8th July (H. E. Rose); juvenile, 28th August to 1st September (I. R. & N. C. Machin, J. P. Martin *et al.*).

Dorset Langham, 18th May (J. V. Boys).

Essex Boreham, two, 8th June (C. J. Mackenzie-Grieve, J. Miller *et al.*).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, juvenile, 22nd August (R. A. Chapman *et al.*).

Humberside Tophill Low Reservoirs, adult, 22nd June (P. W. Izzard).

Kent Dungeness, adult, 18th to 21st June (J. Gooders, S. McMinn); juvenile, 1st to 7th August (S. P. Clancy, B. Taggart *et al.*); juvenile, 17th to 23rd, also at Lydd (G. Hopwood *et al.*); juvenile, 30th August to 15th September, also at Lydd (D. W. Taylor *et al.*) (plates 266 & 267). Grain, juvenile, 26th August to 4th September (T. E. Bowley, J. C. Martin, M. J. Orchard *et al.*).

268. White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, East Sussex, May 1984 (R. D. M. Edgar)



Norfolk Llyn Point, juvenile, 24th to 27th August (J. B. Kemp *et al.*); adult, 5th September (A. Banwell, N. Bostock *et al.*). Denver Sluice, juvenile, 6th to 10th September (M. H. Raines *et al.*).

Sussex, East Barcombe Mills Reservoir, 19th May (R. D. M. Edgar, R. S. Kelly, M. Kenefick *et al.*) (plate 268). Cuckmere Haven, juvenile, 16th to 28th August (S. Keen, T. W. Parmenter).

Sussex, West Chichester Gravel-pits, juvenile, 3rd to at least 10th October (K. Noble, K. Smith *et al.*).

1982 Norfolk Titchwell, 6th June (K. Davies, M. Doolan).

1983 Bedfordshire Stewartby, juvenile, 10th to 12th August (D. H. Ball, M. J. Green, M. J. Palmer *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe, West and East Asia) This species has averaged 22 per annum over the last decade, and this year's total represents an abrupt return to normal after only ten in 1983.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (3, 15, 1)

Orkney Birsay, long dead, 20th March (E. J. Williams).

1983 Shetland Bannaminn, West Burra, recently dead, 30th October (M. G. Richardson *et al.*), now at Royal Scottish Museum.

(Circumpolar Arctic) The ninth consecutive year of appearance. Surely these tide-line corpses must represent 'the tip of an iceberg'?

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 192, 2)

Grampian Cairngorm Mountains, probably first- or second-year ♂, at least 21st June to at least 1st October (R. Barton, D. Pierce, J. L. Swallow *et al.*).

Shetland Fetlar, adult ♀♀, four, including probable second-winter (*Brit. Birds* 77: 538) from 1983 to mid May, two to early June, one to 25th (plate 269). Two, 25th July to at least November. Recent remains of adult ♀, ringed as nestling, Fetlar, 12th July 1969 (*Brit. Birds* 62: 474), found 27th July (M. Walker *et al.*). Ronas Hill, Mainland, adult ♀, 26th May (per I. S. Robertson). Uyeasound area, Unst, up to two adult ♀♀, many dates 9th April to 23rd July, both probably from Fetlar; one occasionally, 8th September to 17th October, probably third Fetlar individual of spring (I. Spence *et al.*).

269. Female Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*, Shetland, January 1984 (Nick Dymond)



1983 Shetland Ronas Hill, Mainland, ♀, 21st to 22nd June (*Brit. Birds* 77: 538). Further sightings of this or other Fetlar individuals: Uyeasound, Unst, 18th to 19th April (I. Spence *et al.*), 16th June (P. Bristow, M. Chown, N. Odin), 26th (per R. I. Allison); Snarravoe, 13th September; Baltasound, 30th September; Saxa Vord, 6th October (M. Sinclair, I. Spence *et al.*).

(Circumpolar Arctic) There was also a male on Cairngorm in 1979 and 1980, but there has been none on Fetlar since 1975.

Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* (49, 6, 0)

1981 Durham Fishburn, dead (leg only), ringed as nestling, Grefthen, near Vang, Hedmark, Norway, 10th June 1980 (W. R. Lawton per BTO Ringing Office and Oslo Museum).

(North Eurasia and North America) Of the six post-1958 records, four have been since 1980, perhaps reflecting a recent small expansion of range in northwest Europe (*BWP*). This one did its best to remain undetected, identification resulting from minimal remains and an efficacious ring.

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* (3, 8, 1)

Greater London Barnes Common, adult ♂, moribund, 23rd October, died in care 28th (M. J. Cowlard, Inspector A. Foxcroft (RSPCA) *et al.*); temporarily retained by M. J. Cowlard.

(North America) The twelfth in all, but the first adult male, and the first in southeast England.

Needle-tailed Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus* (2, 2, 1)

Shetland Quendale, 25th May to 6th June (D. Coutts *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 77: plates 158-159; 78: 270-273).



270. Needle-tailed Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus*, Shetland, May 1984 (Chris Brown)

271 & 272. Needle-tailed Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus*, Shetland, May 1984 (Dave Young)





273. Needle-tailed Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus*, Shetland, May 1984 (Dennis Coultts)

(West Siberia to Japan, south to Northern China; also Himalayas east to Taiwan) The second successive spring record from the Northern Isles, but only the fifth in all.

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* (0, 2, 0)

1982 Cornwall Porthgwarra, 21st to 27th October, two from at least 23rd to 25th (G. C. Hearl, T. P. Inskipp, L. P. Williams *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 76: plates 6-7).

(North America) The main identification problem is separation from the similar North and Central American Vaux's Swift *C. vauxi*. We hope to publish full details of this record in due course.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 2, 2)

Dorset Portland, 10th November (M. Cade, M. & Mrs W. Rogers, G. Walbridge *et al.*); another, 10th (M. Cade, P. M. Harris *et al.*).

1983 Hampshire Farlington Marshes, 20th May (Dr A. M. Hanby) (*Brit. Birds* 78: 508).

(Mediterranean, North Africa and Middle East) The recently accepted 1983 record was the second ever; the account of the first—in May 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 170-178)—did much to clarify the field-characters of the species. The two in November 1984 were apparently associated with an unusual incursion of southerly air, and three further claims still under consideration were also in mid November.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (150, 189, 6)

Glamorgan, West Landimore Marsh, 3rd June (N. Odin).

Grampian Greg Ness, 19th October (R. Smith).

Kent Dungeness, 3rd June (N. C. Frampton *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 26th April (M. L. & N. J. Champion *et al.*).

Sussex, West Selsey Bill, 5th May (P. James *et al.*).

Wiltshire Swindon, 12th to 13th July (P. E. & Mrs I. Castle, P. S. Read).

1983 Berkshire Wraysbury, 9th to at least 22nd May (*Brit. Birds* 77: 539), also 23rd (M. S. Garner *et al.*).

1983 Devon Slapton Ley, 7th May (V. B. Hicks).

1983 Humberside Spurn, 19th July (B. R. Spence).

(South Eurasia, Northwest and East Africa) A slightly below-average showing. Since 1980, the species has been recorded annually in both Kent and East Sussex.

Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon* (1, 3, 1)

(North America) None in Britain, but one in Ireland, at Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare, from 28th October until early December and another recently accepted record involved a female shot at Dundrum Bay, Co. Down, on 12th October 1980: the second and third for Ireland.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* (2, 1, 0)

1982 Cambridgeshire Peterborough, adult, 17th September (M. R. Coates).

(Discontinuously in North, West, Southwest, East and Northeast Africa, Middle East east to Kazakhstan, and Northwest India) Both the previous records were in Scilly: in July 1921 (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 92: 57-59) and June 1951 (*Brit. Birds* 45: 225-227). This individual, which appeared one foggy morning in a lorry park in central Peterborough, left the fortunate observer feeling somewhat incredulous. The escape risk is small.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (154, 170, 10)

Derbyshire Edale Cross, 22nd July (B. & Mrs L. Carthy).

Gwent Peterstone Wentloog, 25th July (M. Chown, S. N. G. Howell); same, Blackrock, 25th (P. A. Dean, C. Jones).

Gwynedd Bardsey, 23rd July (P. Hope Jones, N. J. Phillips *et al.*). South Stack, Anglesey, 25th August (R. N. Macklin). Tyn-y-Croes, near Conwy, 3rd September (Mrs J. E. Griffith *et al.*).

Lancashire Fleetwood and Bispham area, 30th July to 1st August (P. Scholes *et al.*); presumed same, Leighton Moss, 5th (S. Bell, D. Chapman *et al.*), Heysham Harbour, 8th (A. Mackenzie, P. J. Marsh *et al.*), and Middleton, 8th (S. P. Coyle).

Suffolk Havergate Island, 30th June (R. J. Jones *et al.*). Minsmere, 12th August (P. Kitchener, B. A. Ryan, L. A. Wheatland *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 25th May (P. Clement, M. E. Nolan, A. Quinn).

Sussex, West Sidlesham Ferry, 19th August (I. R. Watts *et al.*).

1983 Humberside Spurn, 8th June (N. C. Moores).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Northwest Africa) An above-average showing, but not comparing with the 25 in 1983 nor the 21 in 1981. Atypical numbers reached Scandinavia in 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 589; 78: 343), and in recent summers the species appears to be reconnoitring areas to the northwest of its usual range.

Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 73, 1)

Derbyshire Morley, adult, 18th to 19th July (D. Buckley, J. Dawes, D. Page *et al.*).

(South and East Europe, West Asia and Northwest Africa) The poorest showing since 1972. Derbyshire was favoured by the appearance of a Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* in the same week (see above).

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (40, 225, 13)

Devon Lundy, 31st May to 3rd June (H. & S. Davies, I. Lewington, A. Parsons).

Gwynedd Bardsey, 30th April (N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, 27th to 28th July (S. P. Clancy, T. J. Toohig, R. Walters *et al.*).

Norfolk Wells, 26th May (S. J. Broyd).

Scilly St Mary's, 13th to 27th October (R. A. Hargreaves, D. Nurney *et al.*); 26th October to 3rd November (R. P. Bowman *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 23rd September to 8th October (P. V. Harvey, N. J. Riddiford, S. A. Webb *et al.*); 26th to 27th September (P. V. Harvey, S. M. Henson, J. A. Hopper *et al.*); 6th to 19th October when taken into care injured; released 7th November, last seen 8th (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 21st to 25th October (N. J. Riddiford, I. S. Robertson *et al.*). Out Skerries, 26th to 27th September (J. D. Okill, I. Sandison *et al.*).

Somerset Berrow, 9th May (B. Rabbitts).

1977 Fife Isle of May, 26th May (*Brit. Birds* 71: 511), also 27th.

1983 Cleveland Saltholme Pools, 17th to at least 18th April (*Brit. Birds* 77: 545), also 19th to 20th.

1983 Devon Lundy, 29th to 30th September (R. J. Crossen, K. A. Mortimer, G. N. & I. D. Smith).

1983 Humberside Spurn, 25th May (N. C. Moores, B. R. Spence).

1983 Scilly Tresco, 1st October (A. Vittery).

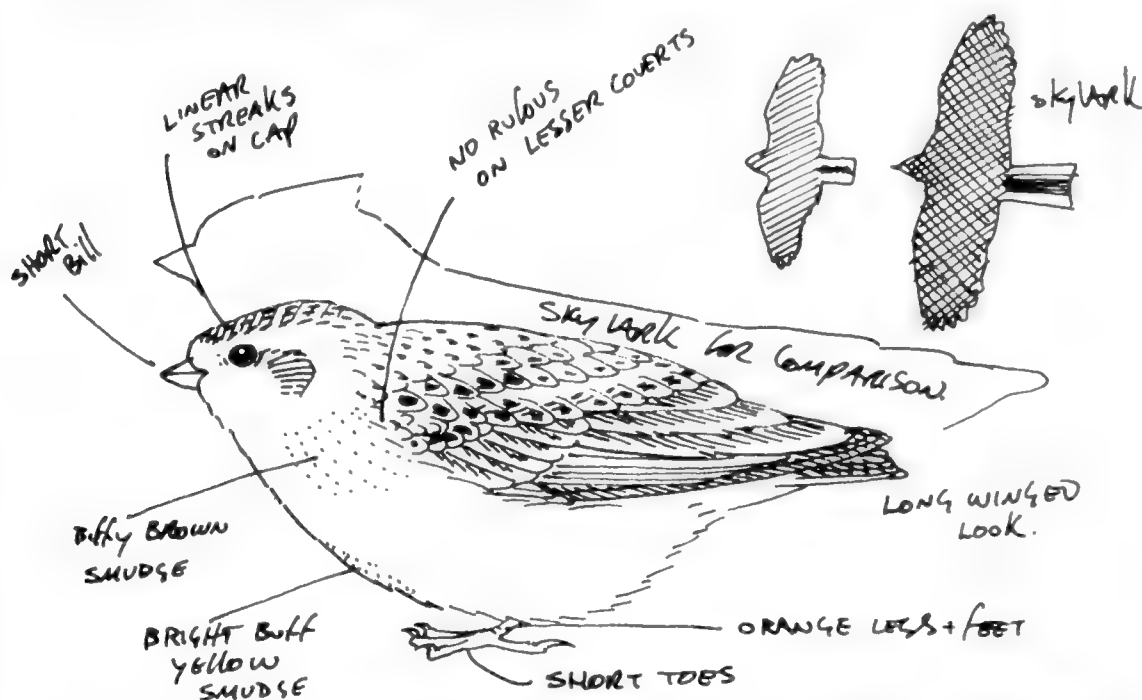


Fig. 2. Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1984 (D. Nurney)

(South Eurasia, North and East Africa) Also, one in Ireland, at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, on 14th and 15th September; and one in the Channel Islands, at St Ouen, Jersey, on 29th and 30th May. A typical showing by recent standards, but including only the second July arrival since 1958 (though one summered in Cleveland in 1974, *Brit. Birds* 68: 323).

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 78, 6)

Fife Isle of May, 23rd to 24th May (J. Torino *et al.*).

Kent Sandwich Bay, 10th October (D. M. Batchelor).

Northamptonshire Ditchford Gravel-pits, 4th September (A. S. Vials).

Scilly St Mary's, 24th to 29th April (J. D. Sanders, H. Taffs *et al.*); 13th to 19th October (S. J. Broyd, F. R. Cannings *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 78: plates 25-26, fig. 2); another, Tresco, 15th to 16th October (A. J. L. Smith *et al.*).

(South and East Eurasia, and Africa) A return to form after three lean years. The Fife individual was only the second in Scotland since 1976, and the seventh in all.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* (120, —, —)**1981 Kent** Dungeness, 30th August (R. A. J. Forsyth, T. J. Toohig).

(Europe, South Asia and Northwest Africa) This species was removed from the list of those assessed by the Committee at the end of 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 338).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 26, 7)**Berkshire** Bracknell, 19th February to 15th April (D. Parker *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 77: plates 76, 107 & 108).

Shetland Fair Isle, four: 30th September to 5th October (P. Aley, P. V. Harvey, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 2nd October (P. V. Harvey, W. S. Morton, D. J. Weaver *et al.*); 22nd to 23rd (P. V. Harvey, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); probable first-winter, trapped, 12th November (K. Osborn, N. J. & Mrs E. A. Riddiford). Whalsay, 26th to 31st October (Dr C. Mackenzie *et al.*). Kergord, 20th to 25th November (P. M. Ellis *et al.*).

(Northeast Russia to Central and East Asia) The best year yet. Since 1958, this species has mustered 33 records, compared with 141 for Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus*; since 1980, however, the comparative figures have been 20 and 27, respectively. The wintering individual in Berkshire was unprecedented. It frequented a suburban garden and attracted around 1,000 observers, who were both well-behaved and suitably grateful (*Brit. Birds* 77: 268). The householders coped admirably, and provided a thoughtful analysis of the lessons to be learned (*Brit. Birds* 77: 430-431).

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (13, 12, 0)**1983 Dorset** Portland, 27th September (G. Walbridge).

(Northeast Russia, across Siberia to Bering Strait) Only the third in England, the first on the South Coast, and found during the observer's lunch-break.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 134, 7)**Devon** Lundy, 28th September (S. J. Hayhow, S. H. Holliday).

Norfolk Salthouse, 16th May (S. J. M. Gantlett). East Winch, 2nd October (A. Banwell, N. Bostock, A. Hale).

Scilly St Mary's, 4th to 8th November, two, 7th to 8th (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).**Shetland** Fair Isle, 25th May (P. V. Harvey, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).**Tyne & Wear** Seaton Burn, 7th to 11th May (A. J. Johnston *et al.*).

(Arctic Eurasia) The last five years have produced 27, only half the total (55) for 1975-79.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 33, 1)**Cornwall** Drift Reservoir, 27th August (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown).

1977 Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 22nd May (*Brit. Birds* 72: 532), now considered not acceptable after review.

(Northeast and East Russia, West Siberia and West and Central Asia) Despite the identification problems, the species has been recorded annually since 1966. This was the first August arrival. It is of interest, therefore, that one (awaiting ratification) was trapped in the Netherlands during 24th August to 8th September (*Brit. Birds* 78: 343).



274. Female or immature Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*, Shetland, September 1983 (Nick Dymond)

275. Juvenile Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, Cleveland, September 1982 (Paul Doherty)





276. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*, Co. Cork, August 1984 (Kieran Grace)

277. Male Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Cornwall, November 1984 (Brian R. Field)





278. Male Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*, Kent, March 1984 (Paul Doherty)

279. Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*, Scilly, October 1984 (David W. Burns)





280. Male Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*, Shetland, June 1984 (Dennis Coutts)

281. White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Northern Ireland, December 1984 (Anthony McGeehan)



Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 50, 6)

Humberside Spurn, first-summer, in song, 23rd to 29th May, trapped 23rd (J. Cudworth, B. R. Spence, G. Thomas *et al.*); first-summer, 30th May to 2nd June, trapped 30th (B. R. Spence *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Theddlethorpe Dunes, first-year, trapped, 2nd September (M. Boddy).

Shetland Fair Isle, 7th June (P. V. Harvey, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

Suffolk Landguard, 13th to 14th May, trapped 13th (M. C. Marsh, B. Ranner, M. Wright *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, first-year, 26th August to 1st September, controlled 26th, 27th and 1st September, ringed as first-year, Molen, Vestfold, Norway, 14th August (R. D. M. Edgar, Miss S. P. Hitchings *et al.*).

(Scandinavia, East Europe and West Asia) The five-yearly totals since 1960 have been nil, six, 17, 15 and 17, respectively; thus, although the species became a much more regular visitor after 1970 (associated with expansion in northwest Europe), it has shown no progressive increase. The Beachy Head individual was only the second in the extreme southeast of England and had travelled 1,099 km on a bearing of 214°. A spring record from the Isle of May, Fife, is still in circulation, while a report of a third individual at Spurn is yet to be considered.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (3, 6, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, ♀ or immature, 21st September (P. V. Harvey, K. Osborn, N. J. & Mrs E. A. Riddiford).

(Northeast Europe across Asia to Japan) The second for Fair Isle, which was also host to the last, in September 1981.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (1, 68, 9)

Individuals showing characters of one or other of the eastern races *S. t. maura* or *stejnegeri*, colloquially known as 'Siberian Stonechats', were recorded as follows:

Essex Holland Haven, ♀ or immature, 14th October (P. Loud).

Humberside Spurn, first-winter ♂, 8th November to at least 11th December, trapped 12th November (J. M. Bayldon, K. Rotherham, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, ♀ or immature, 5th October (G. E. Dunmore, S. C. Joyner). Sheringham, ♀ or immature, 6th October (T. Davis, D. Sadler, Dr M. P. Taylor *et al.*).

Scilly Bryher, ♂, 13th to 26th October (B. C. Forrester, J. A. Hazell *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 78: plate 32).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter ♀, 29th September to 3rd October, trapped 29th (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); ♀ or immature, 30th September to 5th October (P. Aley, P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, ♀ or immature, 7th October (C. Gomersall, R. A. Hume, M. Langman *et al.*). Landguard, ♀ or immature, 7th to 10th October (J. R. Askins, S. Piotrowski *et al.*).

1982 Shetland Fair Isle, ♀ or immature, 10th to 12th October, trapped, 10th (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

1983 Lancashire Downholland Moss, ♀ or immature, 26th December (M. G. Pennington).

1983 Shetland Cunningsburgh, ♀ or immature, 20th to 23rd November (A. Fitchett *et al.*).

(White Sea, eastwards across Siberia) Between two and ten have occurred annually since 1974. The 1983 Lancashire individual, on 26th December, was the latest ever, though there was one in Northumberland on 9th December 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 517). Lars Svensson (*Identification Guide to European Passerines*, 3rd edn) has expressed the opinion that *maura* and *stejnegeri* should be regarded as synonymous, and this has the approval of I. S. Robertson, author of a useful paper on the identification of 'Siberian' Stonechats (*Brit. Birds* 70: 237-245).

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (3, 8, 0)

1983 Devon Preston, Paignton, ♀, age uncertain, 4th to 6th December (M. R. A. & R. E. Bailey, D. M. Norman *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and South-central Asia) This is the third accepted for 1983. No other year has produced more than one, but seven of the eight post-1958 records have been since 1976.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 10, 2)

Cornwall Porthgarra, ♂, 17th to 20th November (W. R. Hirst, L. P. Williams *et al.*) (plate 277, fig. 3).

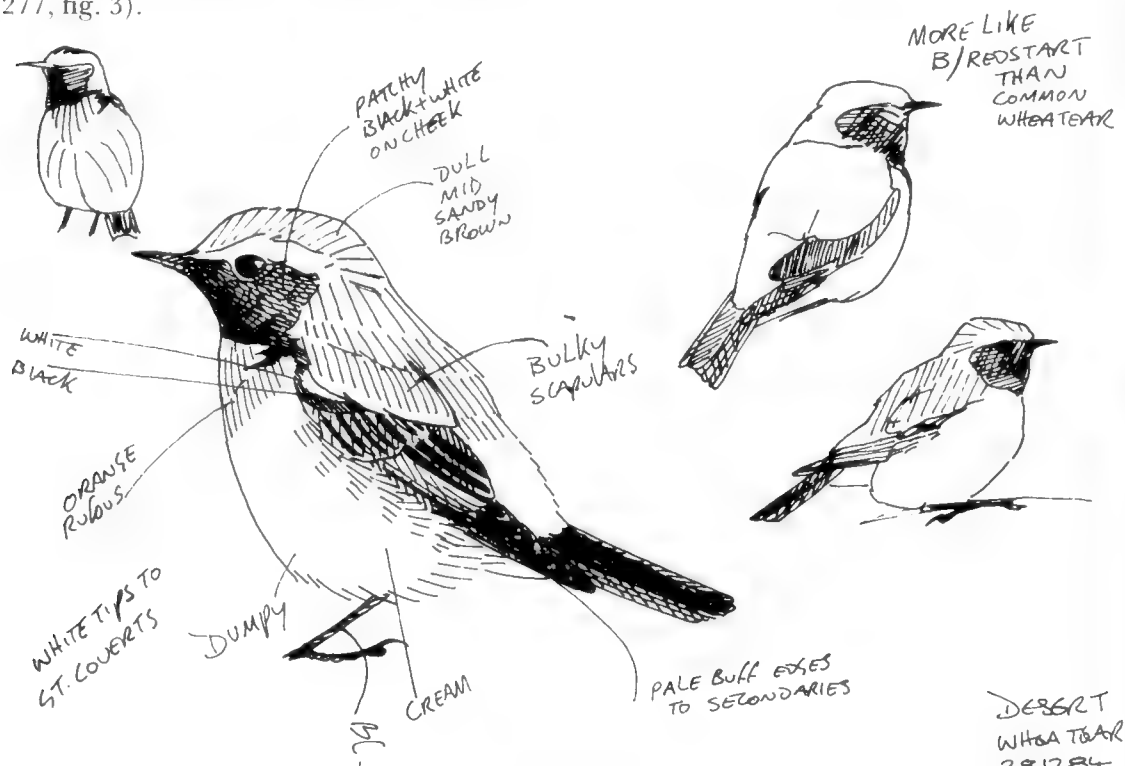


Fig. 3. Male Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Cornwall, November 1984 (D. Nurney)

Highland Freswick, Caithness, ♂, 26th December to about 10th January 1985, trapped 27th December (H. Clark, S. Laybourne, S. A. M. Manson *et al.*).

(North Africa, Northwest Arabia and east to Mongolia) The first records since 1978 of this characteristically late vagrant (nine of the 23 records have been between November and January). There were also two in 1970, but no other year has produced more than one.

White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* (0, 1, 0)

1982 Suffolk Kessingland, 1st or 2nd to 5th June (B. J. Brown, L. E. Fox, R. S. Terry *et al.*).

(North Africa and Middle East) The first record for Britain and Ireland, now accepted for category A by the BOU Records Committee. It is difficult to decide whether this or the Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* (Brit. Birds 78: 475-481, 575) was the more unexpected. Full details will be published shortly.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* (6, 11, 2)

Humberside Spurn, ♂, 3rd to 4th May, trapped 4th (V. Grantham, B. R. Spence, G. Thomas *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, probably first-winter ♂, 16th to 18th October (D. Satterthwaite *et al.*).

1968 Scilly Samson, ♂, 21st April (Mrs M. E. Lacey).

(Central and southern Eurasia) The St Mary's individual was the first to occur in autumn since one on Fair Isle in October 1936. There has not been a definite female since 1962, since when there have been 12 males: whether this indicates more than the male's greater conspicuousness is open to speculation.

Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* (1, 2, 1)

Orkney Widewall, South Ronaldsay, ♂, 13th November (Mrs R. McClutcheon).

(Central Siberia east to Japan and south to Tasmania) The previous records were in October 1954, December 1976, and December 1977.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* (0, 1, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 28th October (S. M. Andrews *et al.*).

(North America) The first was on Fair Isle on 2nd June 1975; unfortunately, neither decided to linger.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (1, 8, 1)

Scilly St Agnes, 30th September to 11th October (P. A. Dukes *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 78: plates 27 & 279).

1983 Scilly St Mary's, adult, 17th to 19th October (*Brit. Birds* 77: 550; plate 221). David Brewer of Ontario, Canada, has kindly pointed out (*in litt.*) that adults of this genus cannot be distinguished from immatures in autumn, although immatures can sometimes be told from adults.

(North America) The St Agnes individual was the fourth in Scilly, and the first to arrive in September.

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (1, 16, 1)

Scilly Tresco, 21st October (D. J. Holman).

(North America and Northern Siberia) Two years in succession in Scilly for both this and the previous species.

Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* (0, 6, 2)

Orkney Evie, Mainland, immature, 25th to 26th September (E. R. Meek, J. B. Ribbands).

Scilly St Mary's, ♂, 20th October (C. B. Collins, P. A. Flint, R. A. Ives *et al.*).

(Siberia and Eastern Asia to Japan) There were three in 1964, one in 1978, two in 1981 and now two in 1984: singletons appear to be the exception. The one on St Mary's was a particularly stunning individual and conveniently turned up on the day of a mass-twitch to Scilly to see the Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*: not a bad day-trip.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 11, 0)

1983 Greater Manchester Sale Meadows (formerly Cheshire), ♂, *T. r. atrogularis*, 24th November (J. P. Shaughnessy).

(Central Asia) Since 1974, this species has appeared in every year except 1980 and 1984.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* (11, 17, 1)

Surrey Haslemere, first-winter, 12th October, possibly taken by Magpie (Miss R. Ritchie, Miss V. Z. Walmsley).

(North America) Also, a recently accepted Irish record: one found dead at Saintfield, Co. Down, on 15th January 1982. The Haslemere individual

began as a mystery garden bird, but, after an encounter with a Magpie *Pica pica*, a few stray feathers were found which confirmed the identification. This is not the first in the area: one frequented Windsor Great Park between 12th February and 5th March 1966 (*Brit. Birds* 61: 363).

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 22, 4)

Shetland Out Skerries, 18th September (Dr C. Mackenzie). Fair Isle, first-year, 20th to 21st September, trapped 21st (J. A. Hopper, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 23rd September (T. P. Andrews, K. Osborn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Prior's Park, trapped, 13th November (A. Belshaw, M. P. Carruthers, G. Harrison *et al.*).

(East Eurasia from Central Russia to North Japan) The tendency towards clusters of records has been noted elsewhere (J. T. R. & E. M. Sharrock, 1976, *Rare Birds in Britain and Ireland*). The Tyne & Wear individual was only the third in England and the latest since the very first, in Lincolnshire on 18th November 1909.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 8, 2)

East Anglia (county withheld) In song, 13th July to 3rd August (observers' name withheld).

Shetland Fair Isle, 7th June (N. J. & Mrs E. A. Riddiford).

(Central and East Europe and West-central Asia) Further records which reflect the continued population- and range-expansion in Western Europe (*Brit. Birds* 76: 509; 77: 240).

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (many, —, —)

1982 England (county withheld) In song, 21st to 28th May (observers' names withheld).

(Europe, West and Central Asia and Northwest Africa) This species was removed from the list of those assessed by the Committee at the end of 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 338).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 7, 2)

Cleveland Hartlepool, first-winter, trapped, 27th October (D. Clayton, R. T. McAndrew *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, trapped, 30th May (D. Bird, P. V. Harvey, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

(South Russia and Asia) The last four years have produced six records. The Hartlepool bird is the second-latest ever, and that on Fair Isle the first in spring. Incidentally, singles have occurred in Finland in June or July in four years since 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 590).

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 3, 1)

Humberside Spurn, ♂, trapped, 28th May (J. Cudworth, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe, across Asia to Mongolia) As with the previous species, this is the first to occur in spring, and the near-coincidence of dates is noteworthy. Another spring record, from Norfolk, is still under consideration.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 107, 2)

Norfolk Titchwell, 20th May (A. Dawe, M. J. Keene *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Knaresborough, in song, 19th May (J. R. Mather *et al.*).

(Europe, Southwest and East Asia and North Africa) The species failed to appear in 1983, so these two are especially welcome. The last five

years, however, have produced only 11 in total, compared with 31 during 1975-79.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* (2, 10, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 16th to 26th October (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 78: plate 29).

(Iberia and Northwest Africa, discontinuously east to Kazakhstan) This surprisingly striking bird was the first since 1977. Being the first since 1967 to remain more than one day, it became the focus of much attention (*Brit. Birds* 78: plate 62). Arrangements are in hand for a review of all previous records.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 18, 1)

Kent Foreness, 6th to 11th October, trapped 9th (D. C. Gilbert, C. H. Hindle, D. W. Taylor *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 78: plate 22).

1982 Norfolk Titchwell, 18th to 21st September (*Brit. Birds* 77: 551), first identifiers should include R. W. Forrester.

1983 Yorkshire, North Scarborough, 11th to 16th October (M. Marshall, M. D. Williams *et al.*).

(Northwest Russia, east to Mongolia and south to Iran) With the acceptance of the 1983 North Yorkshire individuals, the species has occurred annually since 1980, and these five years account for exactly half the grand total to date. A further record, from Dorset, is still under consideration, and details of one at Landguard, Suffolk, in early October have yet to be submitted.

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* (0, 1, 0)

1982 Yorkshire, South Midhope Moor, ♂, 15th May to 11th July (J. E. Dale, G. Lee, J. Lunn *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 75: plates 145 & 146; 78: 475-481).

(Western Mediterranean islands and, locally, coasts) One of the great surprises of 1982, now admitted to category A of the British list by the BOU Records Committee.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 113, 13)

Gwynedd Bardsey, ♀, *S. c. albistriata*, trapped, 3rd May (B. Henshaw, N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

Hampshire Hayling Island, ♂, 23rd May (D. J. Radford, J. M. Walters).

Man Calf of Man, ♂, *S. c. albistriata*, trapped, 28th April (P. M. Howlett, D. Walker); ♂, trapped, 17th June (P. M. Howlett, D. Walker).

Northumberland Newton Pool, ♂, 7th May (Dr J. R. Irving, D. R. Shannon, E. Slack). Low Hauxley, first-year ♀, 5th to 19th November, trapped 5th (S. W. Anderson, E. R. Meek, M. Natrass *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, ♂, 27th April (J. W. Hale, J. D. Sanders). St Mary's, 3rd November (S. C. Harrap *et al.*).

Shetland Lerwick, ♂, 14th May (A. F. T. & G. Fitchett *et al.*). Fair Isle, probable ♀, 25th May to 1st June (D. P. Bell, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

Sussex, East Fairlight, ♂, 22nd April (S. J. R. Rumsey).

Tyne & Wear Whitley Bay, 16th November (M. S. Hodgson).

1968 Humberside Spurn, first-winter ♀, 21st to 31st October, trapped, 21st (M. Densley, F. C. Gribble, B. R. Spence *et al.*), previously accepted as Spectacled Warbler *S. conspicillata* (*Brit. Birds* 62: 479; 71: 53-58, plate 10).

1979 Highland Reay, Caithness, first-winter ♀, 8th to 29th September, trapped, 8th (E. W. E. Maughan *et al.*).

1980 Northumberland Low Hauxley, first-winter ♀, 26th to 27th October, trapped 26th (S. W. Anderson, T. A. Cadwallender, E. R. Meek *et al.*).

1980 Scilly St Mary's, first-winter ♀, 24th to at least 29th October, trapped 28th (B. Bland,

C. Murphy, C. S. Waller *et al.*).

1983 Scilly Gugh, 19th October (J. A. Hazell, A. Stanford *et al.*). St Mary's, 19th October (K. E. Vinicombe, P. J. Wilson *et al.*).

(South Europe, West Turkey, and Northwest Africa) Also, one in Ireland, on Great Saltee, Co. Wexford, from 2nd to 8th May. The most recent years, 1983 and 1984, with 13 records each, are the best yet. With only two previously, the three November individuals are of particular note, those at Low Hauxley and Whitley Bay being the latest ever. The review of previously accepted records of Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* will be explained in a separate item.

Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus* (0, 1, 0)

1983 Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 26th September to 4th October (A. Davison, B. Reed, J. H. Ross *et al.*).

(Northern Turkey east to Afghanistan) The first record of this very close relative of Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides*. Although first-winter individuals can be relatively distinctive, it should be noted that adults can be virtually indistinguishable from Greenish (*Sandgrouse* 6: 69-75; *Brit. Birds* 78: 437-451).

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 108, 5)

Norfolk Scolt Head, 25th August (P. Feekes, S. C. Joyner, N. Williams). Hunstanton Golf-course, 16th to 18th September (R. L. K. Jolliffe, H. Ramsay *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Marsden, first-winter, 22nd to 25th August, trapped 23rd (G. K. Gordon, T. I. Mills *et al.*) (plate 282). Prior's Park, first-winter, 26th to 29th August, trapped 26th (M. P. Carruthers, K. G. Dures, K. D. Shaw *et al.*).



282. First-winter Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Marsden, Tyne & Wear, August 1984 (A. Armstrong)

1983 Highland Aberfeldy, in song, 21st May to 25th June (R. H. Dennis, W. Mattingley).

1983 Strathclyde Mull of Kintyre Lighthouse, dead, 25th May (E. J. Maguire *et al.*); retained by RSPB Scottish Office.

The following records, previously published as accepted, have now been reviewed and are no longer considered acceptable:

1958 Lincolnshire Wisbech, 2nd November (*Brit. Birds* 53: 170).

1959 Sussex, East Eastbourne, 10th September (*Brit. Birds* 53: 425).

1961 Cleveland See 1961 Yorkshire.

1961 Kent Dungeness, 24th September (*Brit. Birds* 55: 579).

1961 Middlesex (now Surrey) Perry Oaks Sewage-works, 1st January to 26th February (*Brit. Birds* 55: 579).

1961 Shetland Fair Isle, 4th September (*Brit. Birds* 55: 579).

1961 Surrey See 1961 Middlesex above.

1961 Yorkshire (now Cleveland) Redcar, 20th October (*Brit. Birds* 55: 579).

1962 Sussex, East Eastbourne, 19th October (*Brit. Birds* 56: 405).

1962 Sussex, West Selsey Bill, 27th September (*Brit. Birds* 56: 405).

1963 Scilly St Agnes, 26th to 27th November (*Brit. Birds* 57: 274).

1964 Dorset Verne Common, 21st November (*Brit. Birds* 58: 366).

1964 Greater London See 1964 London below.

1964 London Dollis Hill, 1st October (*Brit. Birds* 58: 366).

1964 Scilly St Agnes, 20th to 31st December, and into 1965 (*Brit. Birds* 58: 366).

1965 Scilly See 1964 Scilly.

1965 Sussex, East Eastbourne, 17th September (*Brit. Birds* 59: 294).

1966 Berwickshire (now Borders) St Abb's, 15th October (*Brit. Birds* 60: 326).

1966 Borders See 1966 Berwickshire above.

1966 Cleveland See 1966 Yorkshire below.

1966 Yorkshire (now Cleveland) Redcar, 6th to 13th November (*Brit. Birds* 60: 326).

1967 Cleveland See 1967 Durham below.

1967 Durham (now Cleveland) Hartlepool, 16th to 17th September (*Brit. Birds* 61: 351).

1967 Norfolk Wells, 24th September (*Brit. Birds* 62: 490).

1967 Scilly 21st September; another 29th to 30th October (*Brit. Birds* 61: 351).

1968 Humberside See 1968 Yorkshire below.

1968 Yorkshire (now Humberside) Spurn, 19th October (*Brit. Birds* 62: 480).

1972 Kent Dungeness, 26th September (*Brit. Birds* 66: 349).

(Eurasia, east from northern Germany) Also, one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, from 6th to 10th October; and an earlier record, from Hook Head, Co. Wexford, on 12th September 1981. Of 22 in Ireland previously accepted between 1952 and 1970, only three are now retained (*Irish Birds* 2: 536-545). The post-1958 total for Britain and Ireland is thus reduced by 25%; most of those now rejected are considered to have been eastern forms of Chiffchaff *P. collybita* displaying a rudimentary wing-bar. Full details of the review have been published in a recent paper (*Brit. Birds* 78: 437-451). Late August and the East Coast are now established as the time and place to see this species.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 109, 8)

Cleveland Hartlepool, 6th September (T. Francis, R. C. Wilson).

Dorset Portland, first-year, trapped, 6th October (M. Rogers, P. P. Jennings *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-year, trapped, 23rd September (S. J. Aspinall, Dr K. F. Woodbridge *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-year, 3rd September; first-year, 14th to 17th September (P. V. Harvey, K. Osborn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); age uncertain, 15th to 22nd September (P. V. Harvey, R. McCurley, K. Osborn *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Whitburn, 12th to 14th November (D. Foster, T. I. Mills *et al.*). Seaburn, 17th November (B. S. Bates).

(North Fenno-Scandia east to Alaska) Eight were also recorded in 1970 and 1976, but the only better year was 1981, which produced a remarkable 17. The two in Tyne & Wear were the first in November.

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* (3, 313, 7)

Dorset Portland, ♂, trapped, 28th October (M. R. Lawn, M. Rogers); ♂ and ♀, trapped, 2nd November (M. R. Lawn, M. Rogers *et al.*).

Dyfed Strumble Head, 31st October (N. A. Lethaby).

Norfolk Happisburgh, 1st to 4th November, trapped 1st and 2nd (J. R. Appleton, M. Fiszer, Mrs B. M. E. Unsworth). Blakeney Point, 10th November (G. E. Dunmore *et al.*).

Suffolk Landguard, trapped, 28th and 29th October (G. J. Jobson *et al.*).

1982 Grampian Newburgh, 13th October (C. R. McKay).

1982 Highland Halkirk, Caithness, 13th October (S. Laybourne).

1982 Lothian Dunbar, 13th October (B. Robertson).

(Central, East and Southeast Asia) Another poor year by the standards

of the past decade, but the phenomenal 1982 total advances to 127 (39% of the all-time total). An analysis of this influx and the associated meteorological conditions has been published recently (*Brit. Birds* 78: 381-392). The annual figures for the last six years have been 11, 22, 33, 127, eight and seven, respectively, which suggests that a population cycle may have been a contributory factor.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 43, 2)

Kent Bough Beech Reservoir, 28th October (S. J. Broyd, G. J. A. Burton).

Scilly St Agnes, 25th October (E. J. Abraham, L. J. Flooks, Dr J. Forster *et al.*).

(Central and East Asia) A typical year, following none in 1983 and a record 14 in 1982.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 39, 4)

Dorset Portland, trapped, 27th October (M. Rogers, B. Sheldon *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, 15th to 20th October (L. G. R. Evans, R. Filby, P. J. Heath *et al.*). St Mary's, 23rd to 24th October (D. Gibbs, D. Page *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Marsden, first-year, 8th to 14th November, trapped 9th (G. K. Gordon, T. I. Mills *et al.*).

1983 Kent Grain, 9th November (T. E. Bowley, M. J. Orchard).

(Central and Northeast to Southeast Asia) One was trapped in the Channel Islands, at Vale, Guernsey, on 5th November 1983. This and the previous species are still running neck-and-neck, with grand totals of 44 and 46, respectively, and 18 apiece during the last five years. Radde's, however, failed to appear at all in both 1980 and 1983, while Dusky has appeared annually since 1978.

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 77, 6)

Cumbria South Walney, in song, 7th May (T. Dean, S. Lawson, L. H. Sanderson *et al.*).

Dorset Hengistbury Head, 24th to 25th May (B. J. K. Caswell, M. Opie).

Gwynedd Bardsey, trapped, 20th August (N. J. Phillips, G. Poole, D. Suddaby *et al.*).

Shetland Whalsay, first-winter, 7th October (Dr C. Mackenzie).

1983 Scilly St Mary's, 21st to 22nd August (the late D. B. Hunt, J. Marra, Dr R. A. Studdard *et al.*). St Agnes, 22nd September (T. J. Addinell, C. D. Blair, A. M. Stoddart).

(Central, West and South Europe, Levant, and Northwest Africa). Also, two in Ireland: at Old Head of Kinsale, Co. Cork, on 22nd August; and at Hook Head, Co. Wexford, from 25th August to 2nd September. The five-yearly totals since 1970 have been fairly steady at 19, 23, and 22, respectively, so 1984 was a slightly above-average year. A further record from Shetland is still under consideration.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (2, 9, 2)

Kent Foreness, ♂, 24th May to 9th June (M. H. Davies *et al.*).

Scilly St Martin's, ♂, 20th to 21st May (R. D. Penhallurick, D. P. Wyatt *et al.*).

(Central and Southeast Europe, West Russia and south to Japan) Ten of the 13 have been in May, but 1979 is the only other year to have produced two.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 9, 0)

Kent Stodmarsh, ♂, at least 1st to 25th March (M. S. Garner, G. T. Martin *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds*

77: plate 109; 78: plate 278), presumed same as 1983 individual below.

1983 Kent St Margaret's Bay, 17th October (A. J. Greenland). Stodmarsh, ♂, at least 22nd November (I. P. Hodgson *et al.*).

(Scattered from Western Europe east to Manchuria) These two bring the 1983 total to three, and, given continued activity on the Continent (*Brit. Birds* 78: 344), it is disappointing that there were no certain new arrivals in 1984.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 16, 1)

Devon Berry Head, first-winter showing the characters of one of the races *phoenicuroides-speculigerus*, but closest to *phoenicuroides*, 4th to about 14th November (A. J. Lawrence, S. J. Lees, R. E. Bailey *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 78: plate 53).

(South Asia to China) There are several outstanding records caught up in the review of all pre-1980 records. The latest Soviet treatise on shrikes (E. N. Panow, 1983. *Die Würger der Paläarktis*) suggests that *phoenicuroides* and *isabellinus/speculigerus* should be recognised as distinct (semi) species, a proposal which, if adopted, would be good news for listers encountering classic adults, but could be frustrating for observers faced with an autumn immature.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 89, 3)

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, 2nd to 6th June (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Wideopen, 16th to 18th July (G. P. Bull *et al.*). Jarrow, ♀, 17th to 28th November, trapped 23rd (G. E. & Mrs D. M. Cox, D. Fullerton, T. I. Mills *et al.*) (plate 283).

(South and East Europe and Southwest Asia) The Jarrow individual was the latest since at least 1958, and it was this, perhaps, which generated some debate about its identity, finally resolved when it was trapped. Records have declined somewhat since the mid-1960s, the past four quinquennial totals being 23, 23, 17 and 14, respectively.



283. Female Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*, Tyne & Wear, November 1984 (A. Donnison)

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (101, 359, 6)

Cornwall Sennen, juvenile, 25th to at least 28th August (R. Andrew, P. Harrison, V. R. Tucker *et al.*).

Cumbria Walney Airfield, 2nd to 7th June (A. Lawton, K. Parkes).

Dorset Melcombe Regis, juvenile, 16th to 22nd September when found dead (J. B. Good, B. J. & P. A. Gregory *et al.*).

Kent Kingsgate, juvenile, 6th to 10th October (D. C. Gilbert, S. D. W. Mount *et al.*).

Norfolk Kelling, 25th April (R. Clark, K. Davies).

Scilly St Agnes, juvenile, 13th to 14th October (B. R. Field, T. Marlow *et al.*).

1980 Suffolk Sizewell, 15th to 18th June (*Brit. Birds* 74: 488), last seen 21st (W. Simpson).

1983 Scilly Tresco, 6th May (D. P. Wyatt). St Mary's, 10th to 14th May (P. V. Harvey, M. S. Smith *et al.*).

(West, Central and South Europe, Southwest Asia and North Africa)
The two additional records bring the total for 1983 to 22, a figure exceeded only by the 24 in 1968. By comparison, the six in 1984 are fewer than any year since 1963.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 136, 9)

Cornwall Helston, adult, 11th to at least 24th June (D. S. Flumm, S. C. Hutchings, J. Walker *et al.*). Hayle, adult, 19th July (P. & Mrs S. Wilcox).

Dyfed Castlemartin, adult, 1st July (R. Eynon, S. Hinton *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Sleaford, adult, 21st June (K. Durose, D. Jenkins, A. C. Sims).

Orkney Hoy, adult, 5th to 7th June (K. Fairclough *et al.*).

Strathclyde Fionnphort, Mull, adult, 13th June (R. F. Coomber *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, adult, 24th to 26th August (T. W. Parmenter, C. A. Walker *et al.*).

Western Isles Ranais, Lewis, adult, 3rd to 4th August (Dr C. F. Mackenzie *et al.*). Hirta, St Kilda, adult, 7th to 13th August, trapped 9th (M. Arrowsmith, P. R. Moore *et al.*).

1983 Borders St Abb's, adult, 10th June (I. & J. Gibson, P. Hood).

1983 Cambridgeshire See 1983 Lincolnshire below.

1983 Devon Lundy, juvenile, 25th to at least 30th September (R. J. Crossen, K. A. Mortimer, G. N. & I. D. Smith).

1983 Lincolnshire Market Deeping, adult, mid January to 8th March (*Brit. Birds* 77: 554), also Deeping Gate side of River Welland, Cambridgeshire, 5th March (R. I. Allison, A. S. Vials).

1983 Shetland Baliasta, Unst, adult, 14th to 20th June (*Brit. Birds* 77: 556), first-named observer was P. Bristow, not P. H. Bristow.

1983 Strathclyde Cornaig Beg, Coll, adult, 9th August to 4th October (R. F. Coomber, J. Fraser *et al.*). Arinagour, Coll, second-summer or adult, at latest 11th August to 17th or 18th, when killed by cat (R. F. Coomber *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia) An adult in Ireland: at Slyne Head, Co. Galway, on 28th June 1983. Another good year for summer adults, but the seven-year sequence of autumn juveniles in Scilly came to an end. The five additional records for 1983 bring the total to 14, making that the best year since at least 1958.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 20, 1)

Kent Dungeness, first-winter, 3rd to 10th October (S. P. Clancy, N. C. Frampton, G. Hopwood *et al.*).

(North America) A rather elusive individual, which was the first away from Ireland and western Britain.

Serin *Serinus serinus* (76, —, —)

1981 Norfolk Holkham Meals, in song, 3rd June (R. F. Porter).

(West Central and Southern Europe, and Northwest Africa) This species was removed from the list of those assessed by the Committee at the end of 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 338).

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 62, 3)

Orkney Finstown, first-winter ♀, trapped, 12th October (E. R. Meek, E. J. Williams).

Shetland Whalsay, two trapped, including adult ♂, 21st October (Dr B. Marshall *et al.*).

(Circumpolar Arctic) These three trapped individuals were associated with a considerable influx of the nominate ('Mealy') race of Redpoll *C. flammea* (*Brit. Birds* 78: 62, 120). A considerable number of untrapped redpolls (particularly in the Northern Isles) also displayed characters associated with Arctic Redpoll: it is hoped that the central file of descriptions, together with recently published opinion on the features of *hornemanni* and so-called *hornemanni-flammea* intermediates (for example, Svensson, 1984, *Identification Guide to European Passerines*; Molau, 1985, *Vår Fågelv.* 44: 5-20), will provide a more reliable basis for assessment of these and several other outstanding records.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (10, 207, 16)

Norfolk Holkham Meads, at least a pair since 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 556); three ♂♂ and one other, 30th January to 7th February; two ♂♂ and one other to at least 20th March; one pair bred, raising one of four young; pair and juvenile still present to at least 9th April (J. B. Kemp *et al.*); ♂, 16th October (J. B. Kemp) (*Brit. Birds* 78: 482-505, plates 229-232).

Suffolk Locality withheld, up to seven, 29th April to late summer; pair with two juveniles, 30th July; probably bred (D. Crosson, R. V. A. Marshall *et al.*).

1983 Berkshire Easthamstead Forest, ♂ and three ♀♀ or immatures, 29th January to at least 6th February (E. E. Green, C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).

1983 Norfolk (*Brit. Birds* 77: 556) See Norfolk above.

1983 Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-year ♂, trapped, 2nd October (the late R. A. Cawthorne).

(Northern Europe, from Norway east to Russia and south to Estonia) Breeding, confirmed in Norfolk and probable in Suffolk, was a welcome postscript to the invasion of 1982/83.

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* (0, 3, 1)

Sussex, West Church Norton, sex uncertain, 18th to 23rd May when taken by Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (N. Crooks, C. M., R. and Mrs B. James, R. J. Senior *et al.*).

(Southeast Spain, Canary Islands, Northern Africa, and Southwest Asia) The previous three were in Suffolk in late May and early June 1971, in Sutherland in June 1971, and in Orkney in May 1981. This was thus the first readily available to the current generation of birders, and it is a pity that it came to grief.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* (1, 7, 1)

(North America) None in Britain, but a female at Loughermore Forest, Co. Derry, from 30th September to 2nd October: the second for Ireland.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (0, 18, 3)

Devon Lundy, first-winter, 10th to 14th October, trapped 14th (J. M. B. King, W. E. Oddie, A. & N. Trout) (plate 284).

Scilly St Agnes, first-winter, 2nd to 16th October (J. I. Blincow, D. Young *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 78: plates 23-24).

1983 Scilly Bryher, first-winter, 22nd to 23rd October (*Brit. Birds* 77: 558), finders included R. Samuel.

(North America) Also, one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on October 6th: the third for Ireland. With these three records, Blackpoll Warbler draws alongside Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* as the most-numerous



284. First-winter Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*, Devon, October 1984 (J. M. B. King)

American passerine to reach these shores in the years since 1958 (21 each); and a further 1984 record from Scilly has only recently been received.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* (1, 0, 2)



285. First-winter male Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*, Scilly, October 1984 (Peter Basterfield)

Scilly Bryher, first-winter ♂, 2nd to at least 17th October (S. Kolodziejcki, P. C. J. Skinner *et al.*) (plate 285).

Shetland Fetlar, ♂, 7th to 11th June (Misses J. & M. Gates, D. Walker *et al.*) (plates 280 & 286).

(North America) The first, which was also a male, was on Lundy, Devon,



286. Male Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*, Shetland, June 1984 (Niall Machin)

on 4th November 1954. After an absence of 30 years, it is especially surprising that there should be a spring record and an autumn record in the same year.

Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis* (0, 1, 0)

1982 Dorset Portland, showing characters of the Sable Island race *A. s. princeps*, colloquially known as 'Ipswich Sparrow', 11th to 16th April, trapped 12th (S. J. Broyd, K. L. Fox, M. Rogers *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 75: plate 122).

(North America, Mexico and Guatemala) Savannah Sparrow was predicted as a future Nearctic vagrant to Britain by Chandler S. Robbins (*Brit. Birds* 73: 453). The race *princeps* breeds only on Sable Island and winters along the Atlantic coast between Nova Scotia and Georgia. It has a total population of only a few thousand, but is arguably well-placed geographically for transatlantic displacement. A full account will be published shortly.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* (1, 12, 1)

(North America) None in Britain, but the second for Ireland: a much-watched bird at Duncrue Street Marsh, Belfast, Co. Antrim, from 1st December until May 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 78: plates 64, 65, 149, 150 & 281). This event recalls the one which wintered at Lowestoft, Suffolk, from 16th November 1968 to 1st January 1969, when it died (*Brit. Birds* 62: 488). A comparably long-staying individual was at Thurso, Caithness, for about four months from early May 1970 (*Brit. Birds* 64: 366).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (34, 129, 6)

Borders St Abb's, ♂, 23rd May (W. R. Brackenridge, M. S. Cavanagh).

Cleveland South Gare, 29th to 30th September (S. C. Bell, G. W. Follows, M. D. Wallace *et al.*).

Kent Shellness, Sheppey, 5th to 6th October (D. L. Davenport, D. W. Taylor, P. Worsley *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 14th to 15th October (J. R. Delve, J. Miller, H. P. K. Robinson *et al.*).
Tresco, 16th to 25th October (J. A. Braggs, J. R. Chantler, T. J. Toohig *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 21st May (G. & W. Morris, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

1983 Shetland Scalloway, 2nd to 3rd October (Dr C. Mackenzie *et al.*).

1983 Sussex, East Beachy Head, ♂, 8th to 12th October (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood *et al.*) (plate 287).

(Northeast Europe across to North Asia) A fairly typical year by recent



287. Male Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, East Sussex, October 1983 (David Sadler)

standards, though in general the species has increased in the past decade, with five-yearly totals since 1970 of 18, 43 and 38, respectively. Although certain years (for example, 1975, 1976 and 1980) have been good for both this and the following species, there is no consistent correlation; in 1984, Rustic Bunting was quite definitely the poor relation.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (94, 210, 38)

Devon Lundy, 20th to 25th April (R. J. Campey, W. E. Oddie *et al.*); first-winter, 7th to 12th October, trapped 9th (G. Bace, J. M. B. King, W. E. Oddie); first-winter, trapped 14th (J. M. B. King, N. Trout).

Dorset Portland, 14th October (M. Cade).

Fife Isle of May, first-winter, trapped, 2nd October (Mrs W. Mattingley *et al.*).

Gwynedd Bardsey, in song, 28th to 29th April (N. J. Phillips, G. Poole *et al.*); first-winter, 31st October to 7th November, trapped 5th (N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

Highland Inverness, 16th to 21st April (S. J. Aspinall, C. H. Crooke, Mrs C. A. Munro).

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 5th October (D. Foster, J. McCallum); 11th November (P. Feekes, S. C. Joyner).

Northumberland Farne Islands, 26th September (J. Haw, N. Holton, D. Sharrod).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 21st September (S. J. Aspinall); another, 30th September to 1st October (J. J. Sweeney).

Scilly St Agnes, two, 13th to 15th October (C. Bradshaw *et al.*). St Mary's, 14th to 18th October (R. J. Fairbank, R. B. Hastings, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*); another, 14th October to 4th November (D. J. Fisher, J. Hewitt *et al.*). Treco, 26th October to 4th November, two 27th to 31st, three 30th (N. Borrow, A. S. Cook, B. Wright *et al.*) (fig. 4).

Shetland Fair Isle, eleven: 15th to 20th September, two 15th to 16th (N. Bostock, P. V. Harvey, W. Simpson *et al.*); 18th to 23rd, trapped 19th (P. V. Harvey, N. J. Riddiford, W. Simpson *et al.*); 21st to 22nd, two 22nd; 22nd to 4th October (P. V. Harvey, W. Simpson *et al.*); 22nd September to 1st October, trapped 22nd (P. V. Harvey, N. J. Riddiford, W. Simpson *et al.*); 23rd to 24th September (P. V. Harvey, W. Simpson *et al.*); 2nd to 7th October, two, 2nd to 5th (P. V. Harvey, W. S. Morton, K. Osborn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). 7th to 14th October, trapped 7th (S. Bellinger, K. Osborn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Out Skerries, 18th to 27th September, two, 18th to 22nd, one trapped 22nd (P. M. Ellis, Dr C. Mackenzie, J. D. Okill *et al.*). Whalsay, 23rd to 24th September; another 2nd October (Dr C. Mackenzie). Eshaness, 4th to 7th November (R. Gall *et al.*). Scousburgh, 14th to 18th November (D. J. Weaver *et al.*).

Strathclyde Portencross, Ayr, 22nd to 26th January (J. L. Burton, B. C. Forrester, R. H. Hogg *et al.*).

1982 Shetland Out Skerries, 6th to 20th October (*Brit. Birds* 76: 526), should read 6th to 20th September.

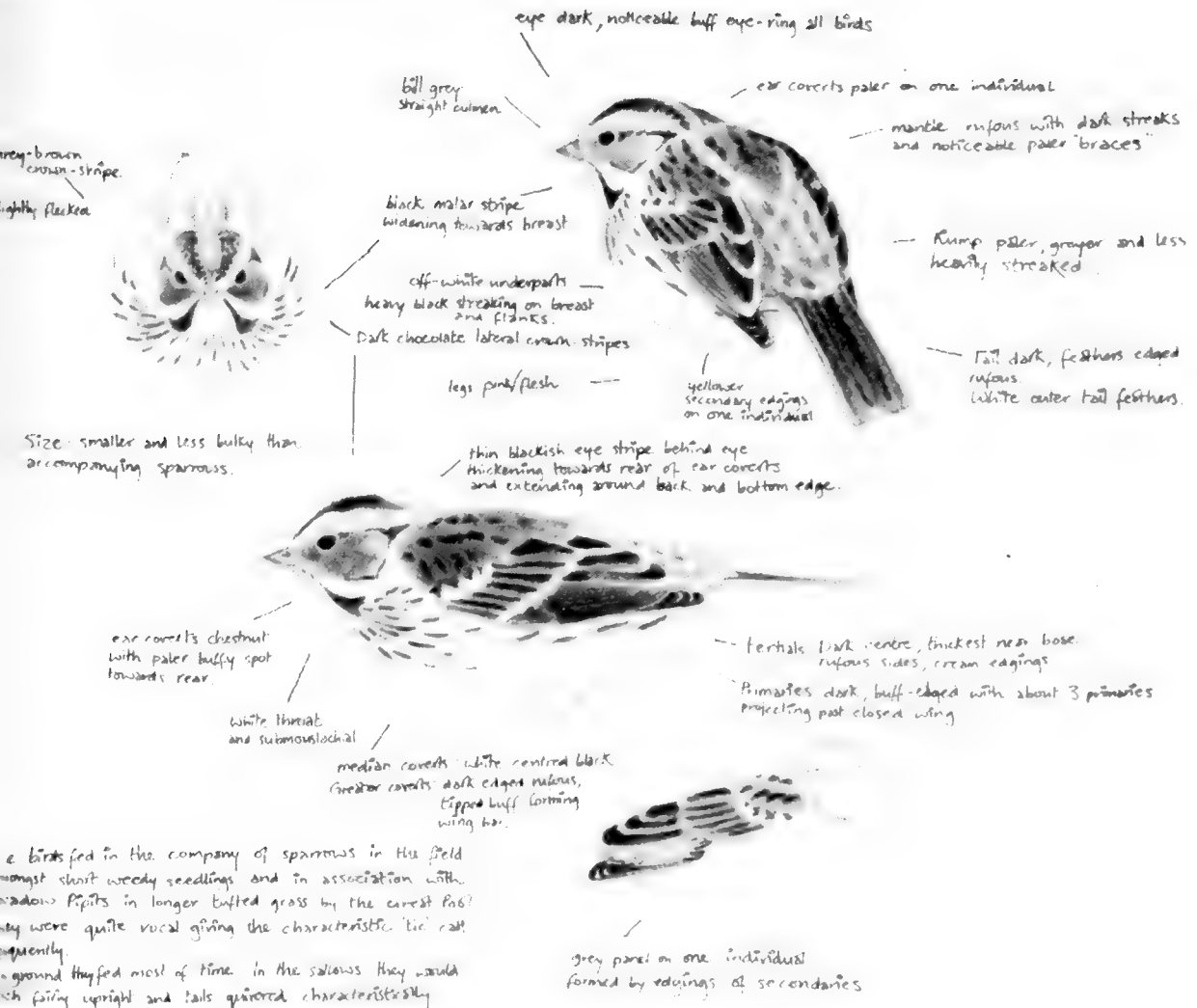


Fig. 4. Little Buntings *Emberiza pusilla*, Tresco, Scilly, October 1984 (Nik Borrow)

1983 Fife Isle of May, 30th September (J. Callion, Mrs W. Mattingley, D. White).

(Northeast Europe and North Asia) A phenomenal year, surpassing quite easily the previous record of 25 in 1976; the number on Fair Isle alone exceeds the national annual total for all but five of the years since 1958. Autumn arrivals fell between 15th September and 14th November. Apart from one in Northumberland, all the September records were in Orkney and (especially) Shetland. October arrivals were more widespread, but two or three November arrivals were again in Shetland. Of the 34 autumn records, 24 were accounted for by Shetland and Scilly: how many were missed in between?

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 103, 7)

Kent Margate, ♀ or immature, 3rd October (D. C. Gilbert).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♀ or immature, 18th September (M. Gray *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, four ♀♀ or immatures: 8th to 9th September (D. Coates, K. Osborn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 17th to 22nd September (K. Osborn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*) (fig. 5); 22nd to 24th September (N. Bostock, K. Osborn, W. Simpson *et al.*) (fig. 5); 3rd to 4th October (W. S. Morton, K. Osborn *et al.*). Quendale, ♀ or immature, 19th September (Sir R. Erskine-Hill).

1980 Shetland Sumburgh, ♀ or immature, 6th September (C. R. Kightley *et al.*).

1981 Strathclyde Kenney, Tieve, Argyllshire, ♀ or immature, 5th September (L. C. Catlin, K. E. Verrall), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 75: 532), but accepted after further study.

(Northeast Europe across North Asia) Although there are three pre-1958 Norfolk records, the one at Margate was the first in the extreme southeast of England.



Fig. 5. Female or immature Yellow-breasted Buntings *Emberiza aureola*, Shetland, September 1984 (from colour painting by W. Simpson)

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 51, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, 4th June (N. J. Riddiford).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia) Another poor year. The five-yearly totals since 1965 are 11, 15, 17 and four, respectively.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (1, 14, 0)

(North America) None in 1984, but one at Bull Rock, Co. Cork, on 10th October 1983. Thus, there were three in both Ireland and Britain in 1983, and all six were immature males.

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 10, 1)

Devon Lundy, 23rd to 25th September (S. J. Hayhow, N. Odin *et al.*).

(North America) The eighth in southwest England, but the first in Devon. A total of 15 American landbirds of 12 species is noted in this report: 1984 was thus significantly inferior to both 1983 (27/16) and 1982 (25/14, plus several pending), but would have been regarded as a good year by earlier standards.

Appendix 1. List of records not accepted

1984

Pied-billed Grebe Kendal, Cumbria, 2nd to 8th November. **Black-browed Albatross** Padstow, Cornwall, 15th June. **Albatross** Portobello, Lothian, 23rd September. **Little Shearwater** Hunstanton, Norfolk, four, 5th September. **Little Bittern** Radipole, Dorset, 23rd August. **Night Heron** Preston, Lancashire, 28th November. **Cattle Egret** Hest Bank, Lancashire, 8th March. **Little Egret** Driffield, Humberside, 29th April; Sandbach, Cheshire, 16th May; Parrett Estuary, Somerset, 21st August. **Great White Egret** Horsey Island, Devon, 25th April. **'Black Brant'** Cattadale, Islay, Strathclyde, 9th February. **Ring-necked Duck** Frodsham, Cheshire, 31st August. **'Northern' Eider** Holyhead Bay, Gwynedd, 5th February. **Surf Scoter** Turnberry Point, Strathclyde, 3rd January; Portland, Dorset, 6th January. **Black Kite** Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk, 15th April; Great Hockham, Norfolk, 1st June; Fairmile Bottom, West Sussex, 4th June; Blythburgh, Suffolk, 5th August. **Booted Eagle** Walberswick, Suffolk, 24th July. **Lesser Kestrel** Kendal, Cumbria, 7th to 10th December. **Red-footed Falcon** Big Moor, Derbyshire, 5th May; Papa Westray, Orkney, 12th June; Blythburgh, Suffolk, 27th September. **Gyrfalcon** Thurso Bay, Highland, 28th January; Eday, Orkney, 22nd February; Glen Esk, Tayside, 18th March. **Little Crake** Wrangle, Lincolnshire, 18th November. **Crane** Roadsea, Cumbria, 7th March; Walberswick, Suffolk, 2nd June; Green Street, Kent, thirty, 20th June; Brechin, Tayside, 2nd October. **Black-winged Stilt** Aberporth, Dyfed, two, 9th August. **Collared Pratincole** Kendal, Cumbria, 27th November. **Lesser Golden Plover** Hilbre, Merseyside, 30th September; Fife Ness, Fife, 7th October. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Gronant, Clwyd, 14th June. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Minsmere, Suffolk, 25th July; Conder Green, Lancashire, 26th to 27th September. **Baird's Sandpiper** Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, 7th January; Malltraeth, Gwynedd, 13th May; Crowdy Reservoir, Cornwall, 12th September; Mount's Bay, Cornwall, 22nd October. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Aberlady Bay, Lothian, 4th June. **Great Snipe** Meikle Loch, Grampian, 1st May. **Dowitcher** Donna Nook, Lincolnshire, 15th November. **Greater Yellowlegs** Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 15th September. **Terek Sandpiper** Bonnington Lynn, Strathclyde, 24th September. **Wilson's Phalarope** Pwllheli, Gwynedd, 20th September. **Laughing Gull** Fairburn Ings, North/West Yorkshire, 26th February; Rhosneigr, Gwynedd, 24th March; Bidston Tip, Merseyside, 1st July; Sandside, Cumbria, 30th August; Rostherne Mere, Cheshire, 9th December. **Franklin's Gull** Peterhead, Grampian, 24th July; At Sea, Sea area Plymouth, two, 3rd October; Dungeness, Kent, 17th October. **Slender-billed Gull** Tatton Mere, Cheshire, 28th April. **Ring-billed Gull** Blackmoorfoot Reservoir, West Yorkshire, 3rd January; Eling Great Marsh, Hampshire, 9th February; Plymouth, Devon, 23rd February; Poole Park, Dorset, 3rd March; Gunthorpe, Nottinghamshire, 5th March; Plymouth, Devon, 7th March; Slapton, Devon, 1st April; Dunfoot, Strathclyde, 11th April; Fareham Creek, Hampshire, 13th October; Pitsford Reservoir, Northamptonshire, 27th October; Llyn Coron, Gwynedd, 18th November; Farlington, Hampshire, 2nd December; Lincoln, Lincolnshire, 26th December. **California Gull** Kingsbridge, Devon, 5th February. **Gull-billed Tern** Beachy Head, East Sussex, three, 18th May; South Walney, Cumbria, 24th June. **Aleutian Tern** Hilbre, Merseyside, 24th September. **Forster's Tern** Walberswick, Suffolk, 3rd August; Red Rocks, Merseyside, 28th August. **Brünnich's Guillemot** Farne Islands, Northumberland, 12th June. **Scops Owl** Kendal, Cumbria, 16th December. **Pallid Swift** Handa Island, Highland, 5th May; Cuckmere Haven, East Sussex, 3rd June. **Alpine Swift** Kentrigg, Cumbria, 26th May; Spraghton, Suffolk, 7th October. **Bee-eater** St Margaret's Bay, Kent, 1st August; Lamorna, Cornwall, 14th August; Dungeness, Kent, 20th August. **Roller** Westbury, Wiltshire, 30th June. **Black Woodpecker** Ashurst, Hampshire, early July. **Crag Martin** Tittesworth Reservoir, Staffordshire, 10th May. **Red-rumped Swallow** Waltham Abbey, Essex, 5th June; Ditchford Gravel-pits, Northamptonshire, 5th September; Hilbre, Merseyside, two, 1st November. **Red-throated Pipit** Titchwell, Norfolk, 20th May; Corrour, Highland, 10th August. **White-throated Robin** Kendal, Cumbria, 11th November. **Isabelline Wheatear** Coll, Strathclyde, 27th May; King's Langley, Hertfordshire, two, 16th August. **Black Wheatear** Southwold, Suffolk, 5th to 7th April; Blackwaterfoot, Strathclyde, 11th to 15th June; South Uist, Western Isles, 11th July. **Swainson's Thrush** Castletown, Man, 17th May. **Red-throated Thrush** Beeston, Nottinghamshire, 29th January. **Black-throated Thrush**

Hunstanton, Norfolk, 2nd May. **River Warbler** Stevenage, Hertfordshire, 5th May. **Paddyfield Warbler** Kendal, Cumbria, 18th to 21st November. **Great Reed Warbler** Folkestone Warren, 18th May. **Arctic Warbler** Tresco, Scilly, 13th October. **Pallas's Warbler** Salcombe, Devon, 19th November. **Dusky Warbler** Wells, Norfolk, 16th September; St Agnes, Scilly, 23rd October; South Walney, Cumbria, 25th November. **Bonelli's Warbler** Alresford, Hampshire, 12th September. **Lesser Grey Shrike** Kington area, Hereford & Worcester, 22nd April. **Rose-coloured Starling** St Mary's, Scilly, 18th October. **Nutcracker** Epsom, Surrey, four, 15th March; West Luccombe, Somerset, 10th August. **Arctic Redpoll** Llyn Cefni, Gwynedd, 16th January; Rattray Head, Grampian, 5th November; Northmet, Hertfordshire, 4th December. **Little Bunting** Harborne, West Midlands, 5th April; Skegness, Lincolnshire, 29th April. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Westray, Orkney, 14th July.

1983

Little Shearwater Skomer, Dyfed, 3rd May. **Blue-winged Teal** Northam Burrows, Devon, 13th March; Elsham Tarn, North Yorkshire, 9th to 11th August; Hesketh Out Marsh, Lancashire, shot, 8th or 9th October. **Surf Scoter** Fort William, Highland, ♀, 26th June. **Collared Pratincole** Elmley, Kent, 1st July. **Red-necked Stint** Cliffe, Kent, 4th September. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Elmley, Kent, 13th to 14th May. **Great Snipe** Lewes, East Sussex, 17th to 18th December; Rutland Water, Leicestershire, 27th December. **Greater Yellowlegs** Troon, Strathclyde, 13th August. **Spotted Sandpiper** Hayle, Cornwall, 8th September. **Slender-billed Gull** Breydon Water, Norfolk, 9th May. **Ring-billed Gull** Teign Estuary, Devon, 29th & 31st October. **Ross's Gull** Scarborough, North Yorkshire, 11th February. **Gull-billed Tern** Hound Point, Lothian, 11th September. **Whiskered Tern** Camel Estuary, Cornwall, 8th to 9th August. **White-winged Black Tern** Queen Mary Reservoir, Surrey, 18th August. **Scops Owl** At Sea, Irish Sea, end April. **Alpine Swift** Gosforth, Cumbria, 30th May. **Bee-eater** Murston, Kent, two, 22nd September. **Red-throated Pipit** Hayle, Cornwall, 14th October. **Citrine Wagtail** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 19th to 21st September. **'Siberian' Stonechat** Cosmeston Country Park, South Glamorgan, 6th October; Burnham Norton, Norfolk, 27th November. **Siberian Thrush** Ebrington, Gloucestershire, 14th November. **Greenish Warbler** Coquet Island, Northumberland, 31st August; Margate, Kent, 26th October. **Bonelli's Warbler** St Mary's, Scilly, 14th May. **Nutcracker** Whalley, Lancashire, at least eight, 2nd October; South Witham, Lincolnshire, 28th October. **Parrot Crossbill** Lindley Wood Reservoir area, North Yorkshire, two, 10th May. **Little Bunting** Bempton Cliffs, Humberside, 17th April; Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 27th December.

1982

White-billed Diver Burghhead Bay, Grampian, 7th March; 30th October; Lossiemouth, Grampian, 24th November. **Cory's Shearwater** Spurn, Humberside, 18th August. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Weaver Bend, Cheshire, 3rd to 4th October. **Red-necked Stint** Fair Isle, Shetland, 11th to 13th August. **White-rumped Swift** Portland & Lodmoor, Dorset, 8th May. **Olivaceous Warbler** St Agnes, Scilly, 29th September. **Greenish Warbler** St Mary's, Scilly, 7th to 9th November.

1981

Pallid Swift Lodmoor, Dorset, 23rd June. **Citrine Wagtail** St Mary's, Scilly, 23rd October.

1980

Swainson's Thrush Lundy, Devon, 14th April.

1979

Ring-billed Gull Flamborough Head, Humberside, 5th August. **'Kumlien's Gull'** Belvide Reservoir, Staffordshire, 4th November.

1978

Lesser Yellowlegs Beddington Sewage-works, Greater London, 17th August. **Pallid Swift** St Agnes, Scilly, 8th October. **Fan-tailed Warbler** Marazion, Cornwall, 16th May.

1976

Magnificent Frigatebird Dungeness, Kent, 15th September.

1962

Parrot Crossbill Tetney Lock, Lincolnshire, 13th October.

M. J. Rogers, 4 Pentland Flats, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly TR21 0HY

Mystery photographs



288. Juvenile Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Co. Cork, October 1982 (Richard T. Mills)

107 Last month's photograph by Richard T. Mills (plate 241, repeated here as 288) is so sharp and evenly lit, and gives such a vivid impression of how the bird must actually have looked, that one is tempted to jump to a rapid conclusion. Other than settling for a wader of the genus *Calidris*, it would, however, be wiser to refrain for a moment until

we can consider all the options. There is no substitute in wader identification for careful observation and an initially open mind.

A good place to start would be to try to determine the bird's age. A number of waders (Sanderling *C. alba* in breeding plumage, for example) show the general pattern of streaky head and breast, patterned upperparts, and white belly. The evenness of wear across the upperparts of this bird strongly suggests, however, that it is a juvenile, not yet started on its post-juvenile moult. The fact that we can see the median coverts and one row of lesser coverts is another pointer towards a juvenile, since on adults the scapulars would typically be longer and overlie the wing-coverts almost completely.

Quite apart from the absence of black spotting on the upper belly and flanks, it is obvious that we can rule out juvenile Dunlin *C. alpina* and, indeed, the other 'curve-billed sandpipers'. The bill is short, probably falling within most people's image of 'about as long as the head'. Judging by the length visible above the knee, the legs also look quite short. Switching our attention to the rear of the bird reveals a feature shared only by Baird's *C. bairdii* and White-rumped Sandpipers *C. fuscicollis*: a long extension of the primaries beyond the tertials and the tail.

Separation of juveniles of these two species in monochrome is not a trivial matter, but White-rumped has a broader body, a blunter and slightly decurved bill, a clearer supercilium, and a usually well-marked whitish mantle V. The scapulars show a distinct contrast between the dark (rufous-tipped) upper rows and the paler (greyish-based and even-paler-tipped) lower rows. Whilst the bill of Baird's is straighter than that of most White-rumped, the dark line of the lores is not in line with the bill, giving the illusion of decurvature. Our mystery bird, however, with its uniform scapulars, obscure supercilium, and finely-pointed bill, is clearly a Baird's. It was photographed in Co. Cork in October 1982. JOHN MARCHANT

289. Mystery photograph 108. Identify the species. In what month, approximately, was the photograph taken? Answer next month



Notes

Interspecific aggression between Little Grebe and Dipper

On 19th August 1982, at Loch Beannacharain, Ross & Cromarty, I saw a Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* diving close to the shore of the loch around the mouth of the River Meig, while a Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* was feeding in shallow water close to the river bank at its mouth. At times, the Dipper was only partly submerged, but occasionally it disappeared completely from view. It attracted the attention of the grebe, which swam towards where it was feeding. When the grebe was within a metre or two of the Dipper, it thrust its head forward and swam faster, aiming at the Dipper. The latter returned to the bank and ran a few metres upstream. The grebe then dived and surfaced next to the Dipper, continuing its chase with head thrust forward again, and swimming fast towards it. This forced the Dipper to fly upriver a few metres. The grebe dived again, surfacing close to the Dipper once more. This time, the latter flew off up the river. The grebe then preened briefly and began diving in exactly the spot where the Dipper had been feeding.

A comparison of the foods of the two species, as given in *The Handbook*, shows that there is a good deal of overlap. Competition for food would seem the likely explanation of the Little Grebe's aggression. These two species probably do not often come into contact, since their habitats do not usually overlap; it would appear, however, that, where they do, the Dipper may lose a dispute.

D. R. COLLINS

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Female Mallard and Tufted Ducks moving eggs to new nests While catching incubating female Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* and Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula* during a study of their breeding biology, I observed some interesting nest-site behaviour. Small traps made of plastic garden fencing were secured over each nest with metal pegs. A cord was attached to some fine mesh netting over the entrance. From about 20m, this cord could be pulled to raise the netting in front of the entrance, thereby capturing the incubating female. On 20th June 1981, such a trap was placed over a Mallard nest containing nine eggs; each egg was numbered. The following day, the entrance netting was raised. On my approach, the female flew off from close-by. The nest trap was empty, and a new nest containing the numbered eggs had been constructed outside the trap; the female had presumably rolled these eggs through the mesh of the trap into the new, poorly made nest.

The same behaviour was exhibited by two Tufted Ducks. A trap was placed over the first nest and, after the netting was raised, the trap was found to be empty; the eight numbered eggs had been rolled through the

mesh into a new, poorly made nest directly outside the trap. A female Tufted Duck with nine eggs did the same.

All three of the above clutches were in the late stages of incubation, and all the eggs from the new nests hatched successfully. Females are more likely to desert from disturbance early in incubation, but this tendency declines as incubation progresses.

DAVID A. HILL

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Heavy hippoboscid infestations on Buzzards On 15th July 1976, at Llangunog, near Carmarthen, Dyfed, Lawrence James found a recently fledged male Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, emaciated, close to death and weighing only 490g; it had a massive infestation of 80 or more hippoboscids (common dipteran blood-sucking ectoparasites). On 27th July 1977, at Bwlch Newydd, near Carmarthen, Glyn Howells found another fledgling male, in poor body condition, with signs of being poorly nourished and weighing 610g; it had an infestation of over 35 and possibly as many as 50 hippoboscids. In both cases, the hippoboscids were identified as *Ornithomya avicularia*, a very common bird parasite, by Dr A. M. Hutson, then of the British Museum (Natural History), who commented that he had found up to 35 hippoboscids (*Crataerina pallida*) on Swifts *Apus apus* without any apparent deleterious effects to the birds.

CARL G. JONES

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Golden Eagle taking badger cubs On 16th June 1980, while wardening a pair of Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* at an English eyrie, I observed the following. At 13.48 GMT, the female left the eyrie and crossed the valley to join the male quartering a hillside about 1.6km from my observation point. As I watched, I noticed a movement below the two on an open grassy area: an adult badger *Meles meles* was moving down the hill, closely accompanied by a small cub. After circling the animals several times, the female eagle suddenly dived at the badgers, at which the cub took refuge beneath its parent. The eagle landed about 45cm from the badgers, which began to back away from it, the cub still underneath the adult though clearly visible between its front legs. The eagle lunged after them for several metres until the badgers gained the safety of a boulder pile, where they were lost to sight; the eagle moved off, out of my field of view. Continuing to watch the boulder pile, I heard an awful scream and, quickly scanning the hillside, I relocated the female eagle carrying a second badger cub with another adult badger in pursuit; after about 70m, the badger gave up the chase; soon after, the eagle landed on a large boulder and began to tear at the cub. The adult badger went to join the first two in the boulder pile. Shortly afterwards, the female eagle took the cub to the eyrie and began to feed the eaglet.

ALAN DAVIES

6 New Street, Gyffin, Conway, Gwynedd

Mike Everett has commented as follows: 'This is the first eye-witness account I have seen of a Golden Eagle taking a badger cub. Badger cubs lie well within the size-range of prey taken by Golden Eagles, but are usually only rarely captured, partly because they are largely

crepuscular or nocturnal. No mention of them is made in most European food studies, but they are included by Witherby *et al.* (1939), Glutz *et al.* (1971), Gordon (1955) and Wüst (1981) as rarely or occasionally taken. Noveletto & Petretti (1980) found one badger cub among 169 prey items from five localities in the Italian Appennines, and Mathieu & Choisy (1982) recorded five among 112 items from seven eyries in the southern French Alps. The latter is particularly interesting: small carnivores (18% by weight) are the second most important prey group after lagomorphs (64%) in this area, and badger cubs represented 48% by weight of all small carnivores taken. The Lake District eagles live in an area with a poor "normal" food supply (brown hares *Lepus capensis* scarce, Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* rare), and in consequence their prey is very varied (M. J. Everett in prep.): it is perhaps not surprising that badger is on the list.' EDS

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Kestrel persistently running for insects on golf green Throughout the first week of April 1983, at Gillingham Golf Course, Kent, a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* fed in an unusual manner on one particular green. On 5th, I went out to watch the behaviour and found the bird, a male, behaving as had been reported by many golfers. It stood on the green and would periodically lower its head slightly, trim its wings tighter across its back, and run for 2-10m before stopping and apparently taking very small prey from the ground. It was virtually oblivious of human presence and of the arrival of golf balls on to the green; only when play was actually in progress on the green would it suspend activities and retire to a staked sapling nearby. The food taken was not earthworms, for no tugging was involved, and the prey was so small that a successful run could not be distinguished from an unsuccessful one. In view of the 'hunting trim' adopted by the Kestrel before each run, there can be little doubt that the food was animate and not vegetable matter; it was probably some insect species whose movement was just visible to the bird on the close-cropped green. Unfortunately, no Kestrel pellet could be found, so the prey species could not be determined. Extrapolating from my half-hour's observation, perhaps 300 or 400 items were taken in this way each day. On 8th April, normal hovering hunting was resumed over the rough areas of the course and neighbouring areas, and the Kestrel was never again seen visiting the green. L. J. DAVENPORT
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Peregrines utilising wire nest of Carrion Crows Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* in Britain frequently take over old and new cliff nests of Ravens *Corvus corax*, but only rarely the smaller nests of Carrion Crows *C. corone* (see Ratcliffe, 1980, *The Peregrine Falcon*). One of the latter, found in Strathclyde



290. Nest of Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* taken over by Peregrines *Falco peregrinus*. Strathclyde 1982. Substantial part of nest consists of remnants of fencing wire (John Mitchell)

in 1982, was even more unusual: the deposed crows had built a substantial part of their nest from left-over ends of fencing wire as a ready-made substitute for the normal large twigs (plate 290).

JOHN MITCHELL

22 Muirpark Way, Drymen, by Glasgow

One Peregrine killing another on ground On 14th February 1983, on top of Castle del Rey, near Pollensa, Mallorca, I saw a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* flying around level with my position; after about a minute, it headed away up the valley. At the same time, my attention had been caught by a continuous and loud alarm call emanating from the scrub some 45m directly below me. I looked down and found the source of the noise, which was still going on incessantly: two more Peregrines were locked in combat on the ground, only occasionally moving position (not like a 'cock fight'). The noise continued for approximately ten minutes, stopped for two short breaks, then finally ceased altogether after about 15 minutes in total; soon after, one of the Peregrines assumed a 'normal' position above the other and began to pluck and eat it. I descended the castle and got to within 45m, before I had to show myself. The victor then took to the air with an annoyed call or two and disappeared. I found the body of the other Peregrine, gashed deeply in the back of one side of the neck, and took it back to Pat Watkinson's apartment, where a ringer measured and weighed it: wing measurement 36cm, weight 900g.

PETER LOMAX

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Dr D. A. Ratcliffe has commented as follows: 'This observation may help to explain how the several recorded instances of cannibalism in Peregrines came about. Presumably an aggressive, perhaps territorial, encounter develops into a serious battle, and if one of the combatants is killed it is then treated as food.' EDS

Oystercatcher with abnormally long bill On 22nd February 1981, at Aber, Gwynedd, I saw an Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* with a bill about twice as long as those of other Oystercatchers in the same field. It seemed to be feeding quite normally. The extraordinary length of the bill would appear to be well outside the normal range for this species (plate 291).

ROY TRAVIS

188 Smallshaw Lane, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire OL6 8RA

Abnormally long or deformed bills are usually the result of injury, often to just one mandible. In this instance, however, it seems probable that the extraordinary bill-length was genetically determined. EDS



291. Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* with abnormally long bill, Gwynedd, February 1981
(Roy Travis)

Feeding behaviour of Little Stint At 18.30 GMT on 4th September 1982, at Audenshaw Reservoirs, Greater Manchester, I saw a juvenile Little Stint *Calidris minuta* feeding normally on the exposed mud at the side of one of the reservoirs. Suddenly, it stretched its head into the air and snapped its bill, approximately six times, at the clouds of midges hovering above it, as if attempting to catch them. After resuming normal feeding for about two minutes, it repeated this behaviour, and then again continued to feed normally. I could not determine whether this was a genuine attempt to feed in this way, or simply an aggressive reaction to the presence of the midges, which distracted it from its normal feeding.

ROY TRAVIS

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Although this feeding behaviour is not mentioned for Little Stint in *BJWP* vol. 3, it is actually

far from rare. Dr C. H. Fry has pointed out that it is practically the only mode of foraging by the species at Lake Chad in spring, and Dr J. J. M. Flegg reports that it is standard behaviour in Kenya, too. EDS

Red-necked Phalarope taking berries from water On 3rd October 1982, at Daventry Reservoir, Northamptonshire, S. R. Cale and I noticed a juvenile Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* picking up small red berries similar to those of cotoneaster *Cotoneaster* from the surface of the water. The wind had caused a build-up of these berries along the shore. While we watched, the phalarope picked up about 20 berries, about half of which it swallowed and half it dropped.

GARY PALMER

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BWP lists seeds, though rarely in quantity, among food taken by the Red-necked Phalarope, but does not state whether this includes berries. EDS

Black-headed Gulls apparently taking lime fruits On 7th January 1983, in Oxford, I saw half-a-dozen Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* apparently taking what was left of the fruits at the top of a large lime *Tilia × vulgaris*, gliding and hovering almost in the tree. One had the bract and stem of a fruit sticking out of its beak.

E. M. MADDOCK

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The feeding method (if not the food in this instance) is well recorded in the literature (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 64: 86-87). EDS

Nightjars drinking in flight Professor Anthony Pettet's account of a Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* drinking from the Blue Nile in Sudan (*Brit. Birds* 75: 377) reminded us that we had seen the same behaviour on the River Alde near Snape, Suffolk. At dusk on 9th July 1969, a Nightjar flew low over the river and dipped its bill a number of times into the water; as it did so, it extended its head forward and down with the mouth fully open, lowered its feet, depressed its tail slightly below the body axis (though clear of the water) and slowed its flight as if about to land. The same behaviour is well known for the Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* (J. K. Terres, 1980, *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds*).

ROBERT M. GIBSON AND PHILIP J. BACON

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Rock Pipits using rooftops as summer and autumn territories During many visits to Scilly, in summer and autumn and occasionally in winter, I have noticed about six Rock Pipits *Anthus spinoletta* on St Mary's using three very high and sloping roofs of houses which overlook steep rocks bordering Porth Cressa beach as feeding territories. They spend long periods on the rooftops, and dominant individuals, presumably males, may drive away other Rock Pipits, which then confine themselves to the beach areas.

BERNARD KING

Gull Cry, 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall

House Sparrow associating in flight with Black-headed Gull There are several references to House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* associating in flight with a larger bird, often a pigeon *Columba* or dove *Streptopelia* (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 75: 37; D. Summers-Smith, 1963, *The House Sparrow*). The 173 pursuit incidents summarised by K. G. Spencer (*Brit. Birds* 69: 274), however, included no gulls *Larus* among species 'victimised'. On 27th January 1983, I saw a sparrow and Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* in flight over a south London street at little more than rooftop height. The gull twisted and turned, apparently taking evasive action, while the sparrow whirled and beetled closely behind it, following every change of direction and sharp alteration of height. As I was driving, I did not see the beginning or end of the incident, nor ascertain the sex of the sparrow.

C. B. ASHBY

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Snow Bunting feeding on sea-slaters On 16th October 1982, in force 9-10 southerly winds on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, I noticed a female Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* on a path about 10m ahead of me. The path was flanked by a hedge of tamarisk *Tamarix* and the New Zealand shrub *Pittosporum* on the landward side, and the pebbles of the seashore extended right up to the path on the seaward side. I approached to about 2m, when the bunting reluctantly flew; it immediately circled around, landed about 5m behind me and continued to feed avidly. I then noticed the food source that was proving so irresistible: enormous numbers of sea-slaters *Ligia oceanica* 1.5-2.5cm long were being driven out of the shingle by the very heavy sea and were crossing the path to shelter in the base of the hedge. The arrival of a group of walkers finally put the bunting to flight before I could determine the exact size of the prey being taken, but, even if only the smallest specimens were eaten, this would seem to have been a case of opportunist feeding on prey unusually large for this species.

JOHN R. HOPKINS

Penny Meadows, Bridford, Exeter, Devon

Letters

Definition of a birdwatcher Do other *British Birds* readers also get branded as bird lovers rather than bird watchers by their non-birder friends? If so, we no longer have any problem in explaining this subtlety. We merely point to the beautifully objective note by Dr K. E. L. Simmons (*Brit. Birds* 78: 243-244), who calmly observed the antics of copulating House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in the middle of a busy road until a car provided the inevitable climax.

A case of observation interrupted by a *Passer*-bye?

JOHN ROSSETTI

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'A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela' Dr Jim Flegg, in his review of *A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela* (*Brit. Birds* 78: 260-261), is right on target when he

says that the test of bird guides is 'in their illustrations, accompanying text and layout, particularly when it comes to use in the field.' Thus I find it curious that he made no mention of the illustrators, particularly Guy Tudor, who led the team of those who prepared the plates in this book. Tudor himself prepared 24 of the 40 plates, but, more importantly, he was the author of the notes accompanying the plates. These notes, summarising the field marks 'Peterson-style', help unravel an otherwise bewildering array of birds.

PAUL J. BAICICH

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Dr Flegg has welcomed publication of Paul J. Baicich's letter, as it, deservedly, 'gives the book an extra pat on the back'. Eds

Turtle Dove decline Recent books on British birds do not suggest any decline in numbers of the Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* here, as has been reported for some parts of the Continent.

My impression is that the species has greatly decreased in the past 25 years or so. It has certainly done so in those parts of Kent and Surrey where I knew it best. In places where, in the course of some hours rambling and observing, I used (at appropriate times of year) to see and/or hear a score or more of Turtle Doves, I now see, if lucky, one or two. In areas where I always saw only a few, there are now, and for at least five years have been, none.

This has certainly not been through a lack of suitable nesting habitat. In a few places, wood edge and thorn scrub that formerly harboured nesting Turtle Doves now harbours nesting Collared Doves *S. decaocto*, but in many areas where Turtle Doves formerly bred there are no Collared Doves breeding.

Persons with whom I have discussed this have confirmed my impressions so far as Surrey and much of Kent and Hertfordshire are concerned, but some have stated that Turtle Doves can still be found in their former numbers in parts of eastern Kent and in East Anglia. Very recently, however, a friend of mine who, like me and unlike most birdwatchers, is a pigeon-addict, spent a week on a driving holiday in East Anglia, visiting many areas. He was particularly keen to see this species as he lives in the north. Yet, in what is generally held to be the very heartland of the species, and where I had been told it had *not* decreased, he saw only seven (and heard only about five others) in a whole week in which he was looking out especially for them.

I can think of very many possible factors which *might*, singly or in combination, have caused or be causing what I believe to be a marked and continuing decline in the numbers of this species. First, however, it seems important to learn whether or not my impressions of such a decline are correct. I should be most interested to hear from anyone who has noted, or not noted, any change in numbers over the past ten or more years in areas which he or she has regularly visited in late spring or summer.

DEREK GOODWIN

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Since 1961, numbers of most common breeding species have been monitored annually by the BTO's Common Birds Census. John Marchant has commented as follows: 'Since 1971, the CBC index value for Turtle Doves on farmland has risen from 108 (relative to an arbitrary 100 in 1966) to a peak of 152 in 1976 and returned to a level of 90 in 1984'. We hope that anyone with relevant information on Turtle Dove numbers will respond to the invitation in Derek Goodwin's final sentence. Eds

Announcements

Loose binders: AVAILABLE AGAIN We are delighted to announce that we have arranged for loose-leaf binders to hold a full year's issues of *British Birds* to be available once more. The new binders are identical in style to those available up to August 1984. These binders cost £5.95 (including VAT and postage to UK & Irish addresses; add 50p for overseas postage). *Please order using the British BirdShop form on page ix.*

New books in British BirdShop The following books have been added to our list in British BirdShop (see page ix). We are pleased to be able to offer subscribers the chance to obtain them post and packing free (to UK & Irish addresses; add 50p for overseas).

The Dragonflies of Great Britain and Ireland by C. O. Hammond (Harley Books)

A Colour Identification Guide to Moths of the British Isles by Bernard Skinner (Viking Penguin)

Subscribers' use of British BirdShop helps to subsidise *British Birds*, enabling us to add extra pages and extra photographs every month. *Please make use of British BirdShop when buying your bird books.* Why not scan our list every month? There's usually a bargain or two to be found, and all books are sent post free to UK & Irish addresses.

Please use the British BirdShop form on page ix.

Your January issue Please note the 'Request' below: 'Resubscription urgency'. As usual, the January issue will be despatched in mid month (rather than in the last week of the preceding month, as with all other issues). This is partly the result of Christmas and New Year holidays affecting our and our printer's work schedules, but is also deliberately designed to give time for as many resubscriptions as possible to be included in the new year's address list. Expect your January issue in the second half of the month (or in February, if you resubscribed late).

Requests

Resubscription urgency If your subscription runs from January to December and you want to receive your January 1986 issue in January, please resubscribe NOW (or before the end of November at the latest). The end-of-the-year rush creates a mountain of mail, and everyone's computer entry has to be updated ready for the label production for the January issue. We

guarantee to ensure that all resubscriptions received by 30th November will be dealt with in time for the despatch of the January issue. (Late resubscription will be processed if possible, but it may be inevitable that subscribers renewing after 30th November receive their January issue in February.) As usual, your address label is in red if your subscription is due, and the resubscription form is on the back.

Subscribers using Direct Debit need take no action.

'Why didn't I get the last issue?' Now that we're computerised, things are usually more efficient, but snags still do occur. A fault in the program recently resulted in everyone who resubscribed in August being omitted from the address-sheet printing. We didn't realise, until complaints started to roll in, and the pattern became clear.

Every month, a few address sheets get stuck together during the mechanical packing for despatch. So, if you find two labels in your envelope, please tell us—the chap named on the one behind yours is wondering what's happened to his *BB*.

It is, of course, not all the fault of the computer program or the despatch machinery. Sometimes it's human error by one of us. We try, but sometimes get snowed under by mail, or just make a silly mistake.

If you have a query or a complaint, please *write*. We will deal with your problem as soon as possible. Please don't telephone: we do not have the staff to man the phone *and* deal with the post; a phone call interrupts and takes time away from the routine work of the usually-one-person 'Circulation Department'. Please address your letters to me: Mrs Erika Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Birds in Gillingham John Holloway has sent us a copy of his 64-page booklet *The Birds of Gillingham*. The area dealt with is the Borough of Gillingham, Kent, which includes a variety of habitats from estuarine to urban, and the time span is 1945-84. Over 200 species are listed, including a good sprinkling of unusual ones. The text is broken up by many of John's lively and excellent line-drawings. The booklet is available for £1.95, post paid, from John Holloway, 2 Manor Cottages, Lower Twydall Lane, Gillingham, Kent.

Expedition Competition The International Council for Bird Preservation has announced that it will be running another Conservation Expedition Competition to encourage more expeditions to carry out conservation-based ornithological research abroad and to gain experience of international conservation

issues and co-operation. Winning teams could get up to \$1,000 each for the best two proposals. The deadline for entry is 31st January 1986. Full details and entry forms are provided in a guide which costs £3 and can be obtained from ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL.

Oriental Bird Club The OBC's second meeting will be held at 3 p.m. on Saturday 14th December, at the Finsbury Library, 245 St John's Street, London EC1. Speakers will include Wim Verheugt on 'Indonesian wetland birds', Per Alström & Urban Olsson on 'Identification of Oriental birds, including *Phylloscopus* warblers, pipits and buntings', and Paul Goriup on 'Indian grassland birds'. Non-members wishing to attend should write to the OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.



292. Comet aircraft at Gatwick Airport; Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* nested successfully in wing
(Alan Timbrell, British Airports Authority)

Wings over Gatwick The Gatwick Airport Authority changed training schedules because of a pair of Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*. The birds had chosen to nest in the wing structure of an old Comet aircraft used to train the drivers of air bridges, the extendable tubes that link the terminal with the door of the aircraft (plate 292). During the Kestrels' occupancy, airport workers refused to disturb them, returning to a normal routine only after the five chicks had successfully fledged at the end of June. How encouraging to see that a British airport's large busy organisation is keen to take such an interest in unscheduled visitors!

Irish Rare Birds Committee At a meeting at the Garryvoe Conference in November 1984, it was decided to change the name of the Irish Records Panel to the Irish Rare Birds Committee. It was felt that the new name is more descriptive of the Committee's work. A report of the purpose and functions of the IRBC can be found in *Irish Birds* (2: 364-375). A list of the species considered by the Committee can be found in the 'Irish Bird Report' (*Irish Birds* 20: 32-34), or copies can be obtained from the Secretary.

Some changes in personnel have also taken place. The Committee is now made up of five voting members: K. Preston (editor of the *Irish Bird Report*), O. J. Merne, J. E. Fitzharris, K. Mullarney and P. Smiddy. P. Smiddy has also taken over from Kieran

Grace as Secretary, and he can be contacted at Ballykennelly, Ballymacoda, Co. Cork, or phone 024-98286. All records of rare birds should be sent to the Secretary. (Contributed by P. Smiddy)

Eric Parker This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Eric Parker, the Surrey naturalist, broadcaster and prolific writer on all aspects of wildlife and the countryside. Yet it is not for the shelf-full of books he wrote that he would wish to be remembered—absorbing though they are—but rather as an effective campaigner against all forms of animal cruelty. His greatest achievement in this area was undoubtedly the campaign he mounted in support of the Wild Birds Protection Act (1933), which suppressed a cruel, nationwide business in the sale of wild birds.

Nowadays, it seems incredible that an annual show of cage-birds could have been held at the Crystal Palace which included classes for woodpeckers, skylarks, fly-catchers and the like, the exhibiting of which was described as 'an innocent recreation'. It seems equally incredible that the show's official guide should recommend, among its directions for 'making caged skylarks sing', keeping them in total darkness for four days and feeding them on whisky-impregnated mealworms! Such revelations, in his articles and broadcasts, aroused great support from a public shocked to learn that wild birds were openly sold in paper bags in the middle of

London. Parker himself, when gathering evidence, visited a street-market in Club Row, London, where Blackbirds were sold in 15 cm × 10 cm cardboard boxes, and House Sparrows and Linnets in small, paper bags.

The full horrors of this trade are described in his autobiography, *Memory Looks Forward*, although his account does not dwell on the personal abuse and animosity which his correspondence reveals he had to face. Then, as now, vested interests existed which did not deny the cruelty involved, yet sought to justify it on grounds of economic necessity. These interests extended to a small group of members of the House of Commons who, at one time, seemed likely to obstruct the Bill and have it thrown out. It was, perhaps, more than coincidence that the Government of the day espoused the Bill at the eleventh hour, following a letter Parker had written to the Prime Minister.

A further campaign followed, this time an exposure of the methods of unscrupulous egg-collectors, which resulted in his book, *Ethics of Egg-Collecting*.

His books are still worth reading, and the lovely garden at Feathercombe, which he turned into a bird sanctuary, is a living tribute to his memory. But, above all, he deserves to be remembered for his devotion to the fight against the persecution of wild birds. (Contributed by Dr Anthony Reeve)

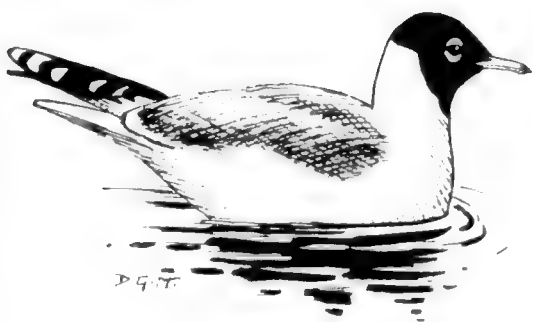
Wetlands Campaign The WWF and the IUCN have launched a fund-raising campaign to benefit wetlands worldwide. Birdwatchers do not have to be told how valuable these habitats are to birds. Just think of how much time you spend looking at birds on lakes, rivers, reservoirs, marshes, coastal lagoons, and so on. Frequent comments in these columns and in other journals, magazines and newspapers are ample testament to the destruction and threats that wetlands face. The WWF and the IUCN want our money, of course, but teachers, group leaders and other interested people might like to get further information about the Wetlands Conservation Programme from WWF-UK, Panda House, 11-13 Ockford Road, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1QU.

Filey Brigg report The Filey Brigg Ornithological Group's Annual Report for 1984 is now available, price £1.30 (incl. p & p) from Peter Dunn, 16 Southwold Rise, Southwold, Scarborough YO11 3RB.

Scandinavian Sea Bird Group The Scandinavian Sea Bird Group was established in 1978 by ornithologists in Denmark and Sweden, with Norway joining in 1984. The objective of the group is to investigate the occurrence of seabirds in the Kattegat especially. From 1985, the Skagerrak and part of the North Sea were included in the primary investigation area. Yearly counts have been made by the Group, and duplicated reports have been published annually since 1978. In the autumn of 1984, an influx of Gannets *Sula bassana*, Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus* and Little Auks *Alle alle* was remarkable. At Blåvands Huk, Denmark, 160 Sooty Shearwaters were seen on one day and up to 500 Little Auks per day at the Skaw, Denmark. The Seventh Annual Meeting of the Group was held in November 1984, at Kullen, Sweden, with 35 enthusiastic seabird observers discussing topics such as counts from ferries in the area, meteorological problems, oil pollution and accounts from migration sites. The next meeting will take place on 3rd November 1985 at Getterön, near Varberg, Sweden. All ornithologists with a special interest in seabirds are welcome. In 1985, the Scandinavian Sea Bird Group is to publish a new journal, *Pelagicus*. This, and the old reports, are available, price £2.50, from Dansk Ornithologisk Forening, D.O.F.-salg, Vesterbrogade 140, DK-1620 Copenhagen V, Denmark. The Group is keen to make contact with other seabird enthusiasts in Britain and Ireland. The person to write to on this and other matters is Erik Vikkelsø Rasmussen, Hjortsvej 18, DK-4500 Nykøbing, Sjælland, Denmark.

New Recorder for Gwent Brian J. Gregory, Monmouth School, Monmouth, Gwent, has taken over from Dr W. A. Venables as Recorder for Gwent.

Our bias We are sometimes accused of having a distinct regional bias in 'News and comment' in that we seem to report very little that goes on outside England, and for that matter rather little that goes on outside certain areas and 'good places'. There is probably some truth in this, but it is also a fact that the content of the feature reflects the *same* bias in what you write to tell us about! We hear very little from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (with a few notable exceptions): so what about it, those of you who have something to say?



Recent reports

Ian Dawson and Keith Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

The dates in this report refer to August unless otherwise stated.

The cool unsettled weather experienced this summer continued during August as a series of low-pressure systems tracked eastwards bringing mainly cool air in from the North Atlantic. Only on 13th, 29th and 30th, when an anticyclone to the southeast came near, did warmer air arrive from the south. The winds were predominantly westerly in the south, with easterlies only in the far north. Few days were without rainfall.

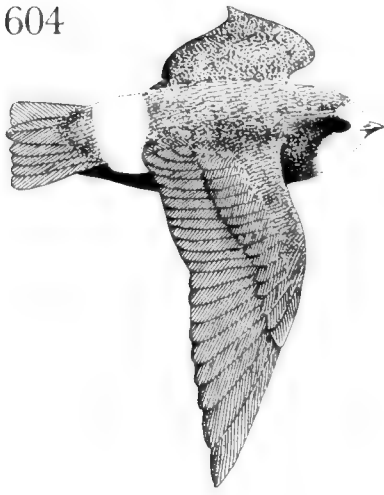
The easterly winds brought Fair Isle (Shetland) excellent numbers of birds, both regular and scarce drift migrants: there were plenty of **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* from 10th with a maximum of five on 31st, 40 **Garden Warblers** *S. borin* on 30th, and maxima of ten **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla*, eight **Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, 410 **Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* and eight **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* (an autumn record), all on 20th. The first two **Fieldfares** *Turdus pilaris* appeared there on 15th, and other good birds included four **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina*, a **Subalpine Warbler** *S. cantillans* from July to 2nd, two **Aquatic Warblers** *A. paludicola* mid month, three **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus*, an **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* on 30th and 31st, a male **Black-headed Bunting** *E. melanocephala* from 4th to 14th, and a **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* on 31st to end a superb month. Another Citrine Wagtail appeared on the same day at Tynningham (Lothian).

By contrast, Sandwich (Kent) had a poor month, with **Whinchats** *Saxicola rubetra* and **Wheatears** 'very scarce', few **Pied Flycatchers** *Ficedula hypoleuca*, and only a single **Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, on 29th. There was, however, an impressive southward movement there of 8,500 **Swifts** *Apus apus* on 10th. Even more (18,000) had flown out to sea at Dungeness (Kent) on 2nd. Orkney shared some of Fair Isle's good fortune, with three **Red-backed Shrikes** and a **Wryneck** on North Ronaldsay from 16th and, after one on Hoy in July, there were four

further reports of a single **Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* around the islands. This species was noted over Mansfield (Nottinghamshire) on 15th July, Norwich (Norfolk) on 22nd, and irregularly at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) from 26th to 29th, with two others passing through there on 28th. The only **Barred Warbler** reported away from Fair Isle was one at Spurn (Humberside) on 25th, and single **Icterine Warblers** were found at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 24th, Landguard (Suffolk) on 27th and Spurn on 31st. **Melodious Warblers** *H. polyglotta* were equally scarce, with none until 21st at Portland (Dorset), and further singles on Jersey (Channel Islands), the Isle of Wight, Porthgwarra (Cornwall) and Nanquidno (Cornwall) in the last few days of the month. Three **Wrynecks** reached Suffolk in the last week, and there were **Aquatic Warblers** at Spurn, Blakeney (Norfolk) and Marazion (Cornwall), and two, an adult and a juvenile, at St Ouen's Pond (Jersey) on 31st. To complete the picture of scarce passerine migrants, there were **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* at Portland around 10th and Hengistbury Head (Dorset) on 31st and 1st September, a **Serin** *Serinus serinus* through Spurn on 1st, **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* at Blakeney about 22nd and several in East Sussex at the end of the month, and single **Ortolan Buntings** at Spurn and Blakeney around 25th.

Of the common migrants, **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* occurred in larger numbers than usual at the English east coast observatories, with, for example, a fall of 300 at Landguard on 27th, though Walney (Cumbria) in the northwest had reduced numbers of this species and of most other regular passage migrants (e.g. 26 bird-days for **Tree Pipit** *A. trivialis* compared with 154 for August last year). After the earlier irruption of Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra*, **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** *Dendrocopos major*, perhaps of Scandinavian origin, trickled through Spurn, with a maximum of three on 18th.

Rarities not already mentioned were **Alpine Swifts** *Apus melba* at Berry Head



(Devon) from about 10th to 18th and at Barnsley (South Yorkshire) on 22nd, a **Little Swift** *A. affinis* at Slapton (Devon) on 15th and 16th, a **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* and **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* on Shetland in the third week, **Bonelli's Warbler** *P. bonelli* near St Ives (Cornwall) on 8th, and a **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* at St Catherine's Point (Isle of Wight) on 22nd. There was also a potential addition to the British and Irish list: a **Black-faced Bunting** *Emberiza spodocephala* on the Hayle Estuary (Cornwall) on 4th (the escape risk will have to be assessed carefully).

Waders

The month provided an excellent variety of waders. **Curlew Sandpipers** *Calidris ferruginea* occurred in above average numbers, with notable counts of around 100 at Cliffe (Kent), and 66 at Stanpit Marsh (Dorset) on 14th, and a record count of four on Fair Isle on 31st. Most of the other regular migrants appeared to be in lower numbers than usual, especially **Greenshanks** *Tringa nebularia*. A notable movement of **Common Sandpipers** *Actitis hypoleucos* took place early in the month, with 107 at Abberton Reservoir (Essex) on 4th, 35 on the Severn below Lydney (Gloucestershire) on 5th, and 75 on this date at Sandwich, though this figure is half what is expected there in early August. There was a widespread movement of **Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* in the latter half of the month, with reports from Cumbria, Norfolk (plates 301 & 302), East Sussex, the Isle of Wight and Cornwall. **Kentish Plovers** *C. alexandrinus* have been scarce this year, with individuals only at Holkham Gap (Norfolk) on 6th, at Cley (Norfolk) a little earlier, and at Minsmere on 23rd. **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii* stayed at Aberlady (Lothian) from 17th to 22nd, and on the Norfolk and Suffolk coasts, while a record

flock of 251 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* for Sandwich passed through north on 10th. A **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedipnemus* at Colliford Lake (Cornwall) on 13th was well out of range, and the strong winds brought good numbers for August of **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius* to delight seawatchers, with 11 off Malin Head (Co. Donegal) on 4th, nine off Porthgwarra on 11th, and five past Hengistbury Head on 15th.

Eurasian vagrants had widely scattered origins. The **Greater Sand Plover** *C. leschenaultii* remained in the Cley/Blakeney area until at least 21st. The autumn's second adult **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* was at Aberlady on 17th, a **Marsh Sandpiper** *T. stagnatilis* flew through Spurn on 21st, and 30th saw the arrival of a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* on Fair Isle and a **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* on the River Hamble (Hampshire). Totally unexpected was Britain and Ireland's second **Little Whimbrel** *Numenius minutus*, in the Blakeney/Cley/Salthouse area from 24th (the first, in Mid Glamorgan in 1982, was also in late August).

Of presumed Nearctic origin were three **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* in Cornwall as well as several more on the English east coast. A **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* appeared at Arne (Dorset) on 31st July, while the Minsmere **Greater Yellowlegs** *T. melanoleuca* remained until 13th, and its smaller cousin, the **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes*, was reported from Staines Reservoir (Surrey) on 7th and 8th. **Wilson's Phalaropes** *P. tricolor* graced Devon early in the month, Cley on 15th and 16th, and Aberlady on 31st. Single **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis* appeared early at Ballycotton (Co. Cork) on 3rd, and Rogertown (Co. Dublin) on 6th, and later on Tees-side (Cleveland) around 21st, and at Davidstow (Cornwall) from 31st into September. **Baird's Sandpipers** *Calidris bairdii* were at Lissagriffin (Co. Cork) on 4th and Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) from 16th to 18th, while the English east coast surprisingly held a monopoly on **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *C. pusilla*, an adult at Easington (Humber-side) on 13th, and **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis*, at Spurn and Easington on 7th and 8th, Cley from 18th, and Titchwell (Norfolk) at the end of the month. In contrast to its recent extreme rarity, another **Stilt Sandpiper** *Microphalama himantopus* was found, at Dungeness on 22nd. A **Lesser**

Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* was on St Mary's (Scilly) in the third week, and the same island played host to a **Solitary Sandpiper** *T. solitaria* from 31st.

Seabirds

The persistent strong westerlies kept West Coast seawatchers happy. Cornwall had a virtual monopoly on **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis*, with small numbers especially off Porthgwarra, although there was one off Walney on 2nd. **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* were more widespread and included individuals off Spurn on 15th and 16th, Gullane Point (Lothian) on 10th, and Walney on 20th, and the high total of 513 passing Porthgwarra on 29th. Surprisingly,

there were very few large shearwaters off Cape Clear (Co. Cork) until late in the month. **Sooty Shearwaters** *P. griseus* were much more widespread, and a movement of 200 an hour west past North Ronaldsay took place on 26th. Movements of **Manx Shearwaters** *P. puffinus* of the race *mauretanicus*, so-called 'Balearic Shearwater', included 29 off Porthgwarra on 4th and one off Skokholm (Dyfed) on 5th. Single **Little Shearwaters** *P. assimilis* passed Ayr (Strathclyde) early in the month and St Ives on 24th. A pelagic trip off the Irish coast on 17th was successful in finding the prize objective, a **Wilson's Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* at 51° 03' N/10° 54' W, 88km southwest of Mizen Head (Co. Cork), amongst large numbers of Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* attracted to chum



293-295. Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (with two Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* in plate 295), at sea off Co. Cork, August 1985 (Dennis Weir)



(fish oil) (plates 293-295). Two adult **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini* were the other highlight of the trip, and there were further reports of singles off Co. Clare on 5th and Berry Head on 18th.

A **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* was on the Boyne Estuary (Co. Louth) on 3rd; St Ives had another on 11th, and a **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki* on 24th, while there was an exceptional passage, for Cornwall, of over 100 **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* there on 30th, with more over the following two days. A total of 66 Black Terns graced Farmoor Reservoir (Oxfordshire) on 14th, and there were also good movements of **Common Terns** *Sterna hirundo* through the month, with a peak of 400 present at Sandwich on 11th, and 60 through Island Barn Reservoir (Surrey) on 30th.

The gales late in the month brought a scattering of seabirds inland, with an ailing juvenile **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* at Ditchford Gravel-pit (Northamptonshire) on 27th, an adult dark-phase **Arctic Skua** *S. parasiticus* at Farmoor Reservoir on 29th, and an immature **Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* on the River Ouse at St Neots (Cambridgeshire) from 28th.

A **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* was present into August at Kinsale (Co. Cork), while an adult **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* reached South Uist (Western Isles) on 6th, and a **Ring-billed Gull** *L. delawarensis* came in to roost at Leigh-on-Sea (Essex) from 10th, still a great rarity on the English east coast.

Water birds

A **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* remained at Tonbridge (Kent) into August, and **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* were at Foulness (Essex) throughout July, and at Havergate (Suffolk) for the first half of the month: this individual had yellow lores recalling **Snowy Egret** *E. thula*. Another **Little Egret** with unusual bare-part coloration—on the Exe Estuary (Devon) from about 19th—sent pulses racing for a day. Fair Isle had migrant **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* on 16th, and **Corncrake** *Crex crex* on 20th, while a **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* appeared on Scilly towards the end of the month.

A **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* remained at Thrapston Gravel-pit (Northamptonshire) from 25th into September, a **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* was seen at Easington on 23rd, and three **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* appeared at Frodsham (Cheshire) in mid month (plates 296-298). Three **Brent Geese** *Branta bernicla* had returned to Sandwich by 5th, and there were as many as 98 in Chichester Harbour (West Sussex) on 24th. **Black-necked Grebes** *Podiceps nigricollis* were at Gloucester from 1st to 6th and on Walney on 13th and 20th.

Raptors

Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* remained in The Dukeries (Nottinghamshire) into August, and were seen at Spurn on 21st and

296-298. Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea*, Cheshire, August 1985 (Steve Young)





299 & 300. First-summer male Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Somerset, July 1985 (Brian Thomas)



Bassenthwaite Lake (Cumbria) from 25th to 27th. The only rarities reported were a first-summer male **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* in The Mendips (Somerset) to 4th (plates 299 & 300), and a **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* on Teesside on 1st.

The current reintroduction schemes in Western Scotland saw the first wild-bred **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* fledgling taking its maiden flight on 28th July—hopefully heralding the first successful reintroduction of a bird species to Britain since the Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* nearly 150 years ago.

301 & 302. Juvenile Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, Titchwell, Norfolk, August 1985 (Andrew F. Moon)



Latest news

On 30th September: Europe's first-ever **Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus* found at Sumburgh (Shetland) and **Northern Parula** *Parula americana* appeared at Hengistbury Head. In first half of October: **Indigo Bunting** *Passerina cyanea* in Ireland, perhaps not escape since there was **Philadelphia Vireo** *Vireo philadelphicus* also in Ireland and

Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla* in Plymouth (Devon), both new to Britain and Ireland; **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus* and **Black-billed Cuckoos** *C. erythrophthalmus* in Scilly within two days of each other; **Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* in Wirral. Highest-ever numbers of **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus* in Sweden, followed by 20 in a day in Scilly.

Reviews

The Countryside & Wildlife for Disabled People: a regional access guide to nature reserves, country parks and open spaces throughout the United Kingdom. Compiled by Anthony Chapman. The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, London, 1985. 392 pages; 27 black-and-white plates. Paperback, £1.00.

This is an essential guide for any disabled birdwatcher, especially one venturing into unknown territory. Most able-bodied birdwatchers will also find it useful.

The emphasis is on birds, the main interest of the compiler, himself a wheelchair user, but other handicapped people are not forgotten. Each site has a simple compact key describing the access arrangements, a one- to three-star rating, brief details of the main features and interest of the site, plus the Ordnance Survey map reference.

A total of 479 sites is covered, compared with 390 in the 1982 edition, the increase being nationwide. The sites are numbered within regions, with maps showing the location by number for each of the 16 regions.

From personal experience on holiday and detailed knowledge of local sites, it is clear that the information given is accurate. Some extra details would have been helpful, however, especially for the major sites. Perhaps wardened locations should provide such details in special leaflets for the handicapped. A star guide for the various hides at, say, Minsmere or Slimbridge would be valuable (not all paths or ramps are equally negotiable, particularly in bad weather).

Although opening times have been omitted for reasons that are explained in the introduction, I would still have liked the latest available information, plus notes on the number of reserved car spaces for the disabled.

The increase from 168 pages to 392 between editions, whilst keeping the price unchanged (a bargain at £1), has been due partly to the increase in sites, but mostly to an enormous increase in the number of advertisements. Fortunately, they are confined to the left-hand pages, except for advertisement features on gardening and architecture (of interest to some handicapped people).

The photographs include some helpful to the handicapped, as well as the more normal natural history ones. Oh! for a campaign to replace stiles and other obstacles by kissing gates suitable for wheelchairs—see page 245. Clearly, more photographs would put up the price, but the important facts for the handicapped are the essential heart of this useful guide.

D. V. MARDLE

A List of the Birds of The Gambia. A List of the Birds of Great Britain. A List of the Birds of Greece. A List of the Birds of Israel. A List of the Birds of Majorca. A List of the Birds of Morocco. A List of the Birds of Spain & Portugal. A List of the Birds of The Isles of Scilly. A List of the Birds of Norfolk. Compiled and published by David Fisher and Stephen Gantlett. 1985. Paperback, 75p each.

Whenever preparing for a holiday, I would make out a rather cumbersome grid-style checklist. Now, Messrs Fisher and Gantlett have done the job for me, but far more neatly, in a manageable booklet format.

So far, the duo have produced seven country lists and two county lists. The latter are comprehensive lists of species for the counties concerned, but the country lists contain only those species which occur commonly, plus annually occurring rarities. My initial reaction to the abbreviated national lists was one of disappointment, but, on reflection, it is a very reasonable approach. Most short-term visitors to a country can normally expect to see only the relatively predictable species. Any species encountered that is not on the list can be written in: there is ample space for these additions. Obviously, special attention should be given to 'write ins', as they are likely to be national rarities needing supporting notes when submitting records to the country concerned.

The booklets are neatly designed as two-week checklists. They each have a brief introduction, a section to record one's daily whereabouts, and, of course, the checklist, with 15 spaces after each species to record one's daily log, plus space for 'write ins'.

In a nutshell, these are excellent little booklets, well worth 75p when planning one's trip. In fact, the way some of us use lists, it would be worth having a couple or more per trip.

My one criticism is that, as a courtesy to the ornithologists of the area covered and as a service to purchasers, each list should have included an address to which records should be sent. I am sure that many interesting records are merely filed by observers in holiday notes, and thereby lost as national or county records.

With the amount of foreign travel undertaken by British birders, I hope that the enterprising duo will 'crack on' and get more venues 'listed'!

D. J. HOLMAN

The Wildlife of the Thames Counties: Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire. Edited by Richard Fitter. Robert Dugdale, Oxford, 1985. 214 pages; 79 black-and-white plates; ten line-drawings. Paperback, £4.95.

This book is remarkable value for money and I would unhesitatingly recommend it to anyone living in, or close to the borders of, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire as a useful introduction to the wealth of wildlife which can be found in the area.

The task of assembling the material and editing the work was entrusted by BBONT, the naturalists' trust for the three counties, to Richard Fitter, its sometime Chairman and President. Not unnaturally, the dozen naturalists who were approached to contribute have, or had, close association with the Trust. Their style of writing and the material they have included reflects this association, and highlights several authors' lack of knowledge of other societies, their publications and modern records. Some chapters may, therefore, be considered by some to be 'old fashioned', but fortunately this is not true of that on birds, by W. D. Campbell, known to many for his regular contributions in *The Guardian's* Country Diary. He concludes his excellent piece with information on birdwatching sites, but this is far from complete and exhibits puzzling omissions. For instance, Willen Lake is excluded from the list of major aquatic sites; it is, however, included in the comprehensive gazetteer of principal wildlife sites at the end of the book.

The other topics covered are the physical background, land-use history, vegetation, the flora, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, fishes, butterflies and moths, other terrestrial invertebrates, freshwater invertebrates, conservation, and the Bix Bottom Nature Reserve. There is an appendix listing the museums with natural history collections, a bibliography and an index. The work is enhanced by a number of very well-chosen photographs.

R. E. YOUNGMAN

The Encyclopaedia of Birds. Edited by Christopher M. Perrins and Alex L. A. Middleton. George Allen & Unwin, London & Sydney, 1985. 463 pages; 700 colour illustrations; many black-and-white line-drawings. £25.00.

This is the third volume in the Unwin Animal Library, volumes 1 and 2, covering mammals of the world, having been very well received.

After a brief introduction entitled 'What is a bird?', the meat of the volume is a family-by-family survey of the birds of the world. As in the contemporary *A Dictionary of Birds*, these accounts are written by experts worldwide and initialled, but there the similarity ends, for *The Encyclopaedia* is aimed at a more popular market. Thus, the penguin contributions in both

books are written by J. P. Croxall, but in a noticeably different style. It is profusely illustrated in colour, with both photographs and paintings; and of course does not pretend to be a comprehensive reference work on bird behaviour; thus, you will look in vain for 'Anting' in the Glossary or Index.

Each group of families or order is introduced by an information panel giving maps showing world distribution and the number of genera and species. A second panel gives further details of each family, listing selected species. The textual accounts are generally very readable, and spiced with all sorts of strange facts. Did you know, for instance, that Ostrich brains were a delicacy in ancient Egypt? Or that Darwin's Rhea was first recognised as different while Darwin was eating Rhea leg on board HMS *Beagle*?! In addition, there are 'box features' highlighting unusual adaptations and behaviour such as 'Flamingo's Milk' and 'Talking Parrots'; and there are a number of two-page spreads on special topics such as 'Pesticides and birds of prey'.

Many of the excellent colour photographs are unfamiliar. I was particularly taken with the displaying Great Argus Pheasant on page 15, and the Osprey on page 115 bringing in prey to its Red Sea mangrove nest set against a desert backdrop. Indeed, many of the photos show birds in their habitat. The paintings of representative species are the work of ten artists, including Robert Gillmor and Laurel Tucker, and the line-drawings by Ian Willis speak for themselves.

What then are the drawbacks? The very fact that this is an editorial compilation allows for inconsistencies and mistakes to creep in. Although published in Britain, the book is clearly aimed at the American market, with American spelling and usage, and usually American bird names. It is rather unfortunate that the authority used for the species totals and names is Gruson, whose *Checklist of the Birds of the World* has serious shortcomings. The worst feature, however, is the photographic captions, which were presumably not the responsibility of the authors, and at least provide a source of amusement: the Bee-eater caption states 'Note the subtle (sic) colour scheme: lilac-blue breast, russet back of the head, yellow throat patch'; or that to the Fiscal Shrike: 'It also frightens birds in cages, especially canaries'. Others are inconsistent: two different photos are captioned 'Cape Gannet' and 'African Gannet', yet these are the same species; or wrong: 'Many chicks of two species (sic) of Ostrich (North and South African Ostriches) . . .'. The bird topography diagram in the introduction is downright bad. The dictates of space mean that coverage of passerine families in particular is very limited, with, for example, only two and a half columns for the 339 species of Sylviinae; and not every family is illustrated (e.g. the flowerpeckers *Dicaeidae*)—a must surely in a work of this kind. If the mammals could be treated in two volumes, why not birds, for the passerines get less than 150 pages.

It is the reviewer's job to be critical: the general impression though is of a job well done. This is now the best popular introduction to the bewildering variety of birds in the world, and is a delight to browse through, beautifully designed and produced. Readers requiring more information will, however, find few suggestions for further reading, and will have to turn to *A Dictionary*.

IAN DAWSON

Nature Photography Yearbook 1985/86. Edited by Fritz Pölking. Natural History Book Service, London, 1985. 140 pages; 105 colour plates; 60 black-and-white plates. £12.95.

If you have any interest in bird photography or, indeed, any sort of natural history photography (or have a friend who does), you ought to acquire a copy of this book. The English price is ridiculously cheap for 105 magnificent, and magnificently reproduced, colour photographs. The brief texts, in seven languages including English, give details of the photographer (including his photograph) and of his photographic equipment, methods and techniques. The work of 60 photographers is featured. Despite the fact that the cover calls it (within a star) 'International', there is a very strong bias towards German photographers (20), with seven Finnish, five Dutch, four Hungarian, and one to three of 11 other nationalities. The only three British photographers included are David T. Grewcock, John Hawkins and David Hosking. A more balanced selection in future years might greatly increase the sales of this *Yearbook* outside Germany. Nevertheless, it provides an excellent opportunity for seeing the range of techniques of many of Europe's top nature photographers. The pictures are wonderful.

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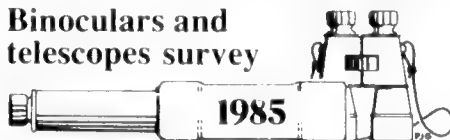
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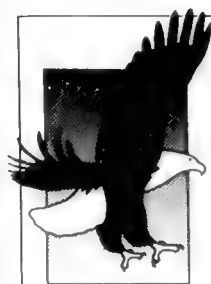
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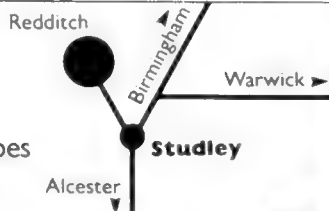
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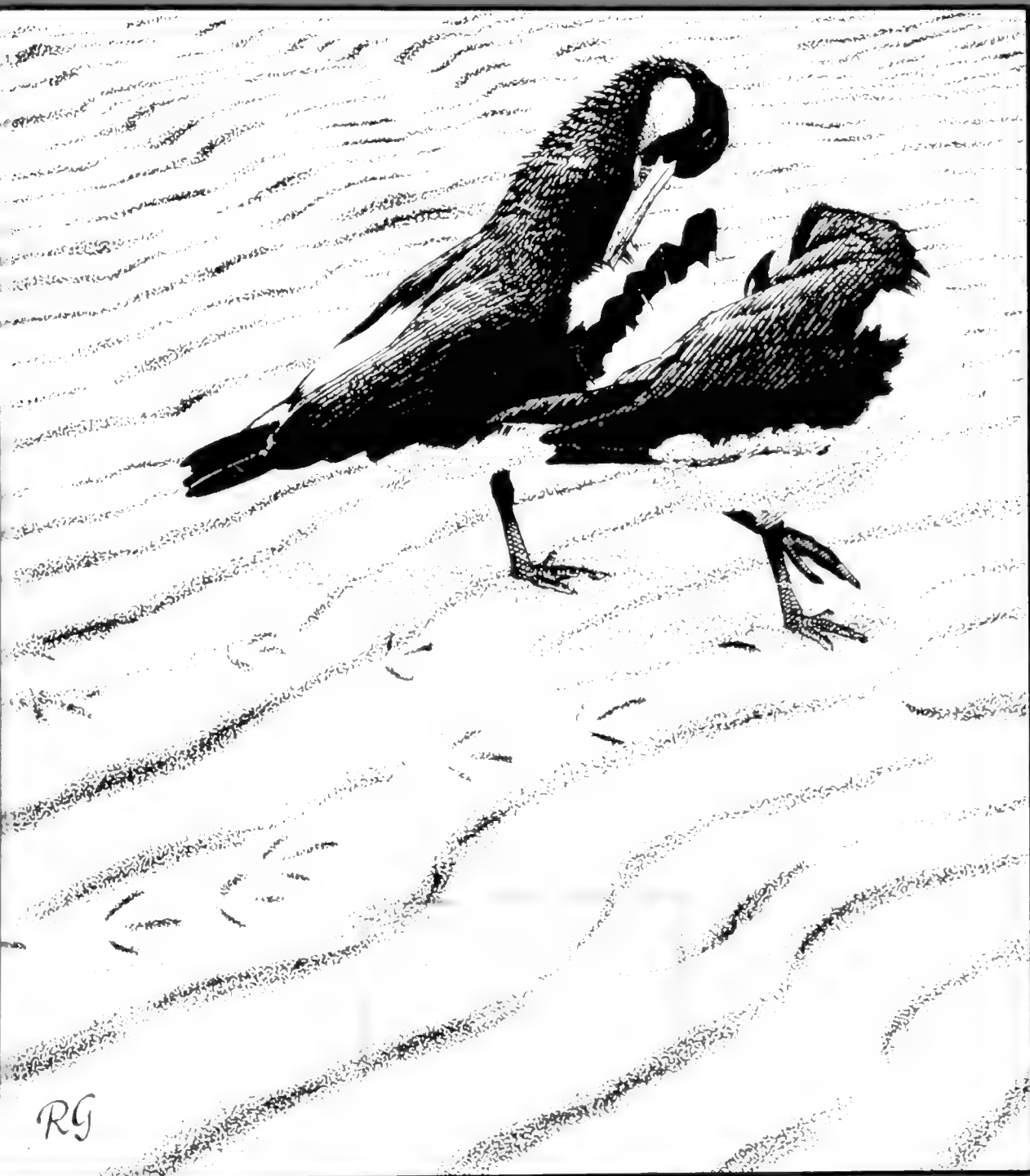
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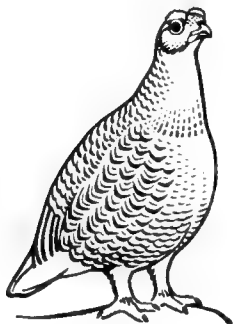
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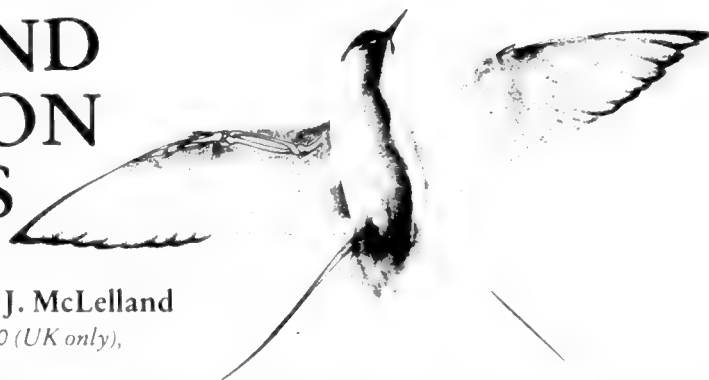
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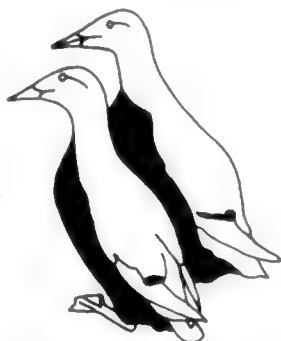
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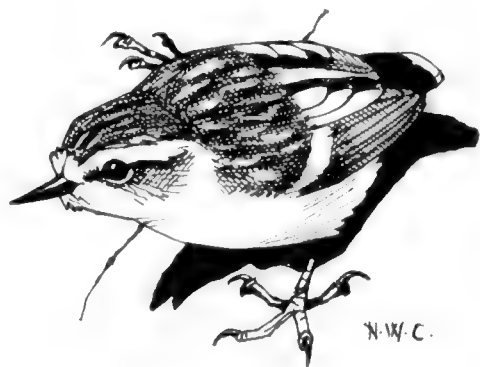
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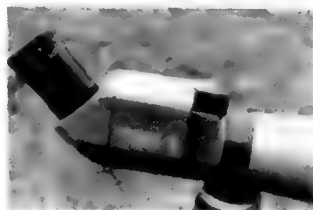


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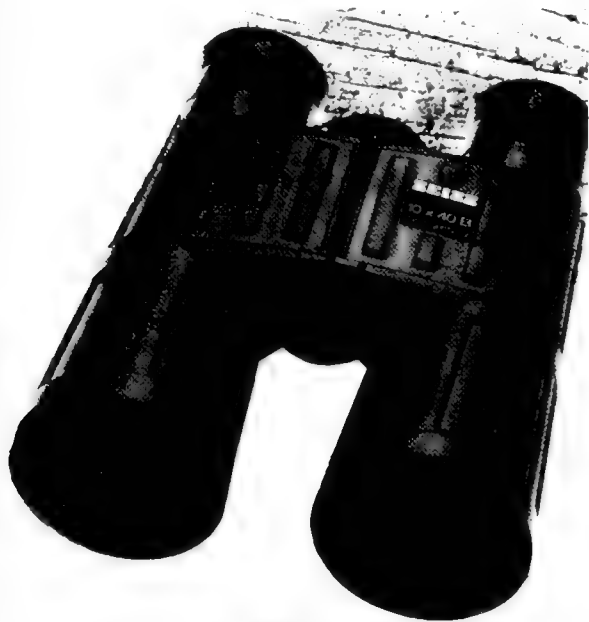
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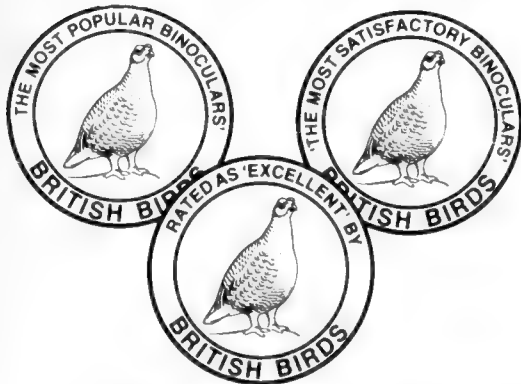


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VOLUME 78 NUMBER 12 DECEMBER 1985

Jay movements in autumn 1983

A. W. G. John and J. Roskell



A huge movement of Jays *Garrulus glandarius* occurred in Britain in late September and October 1983. Although there have been previous influxes of Jays, believed to be from the Continent, into southeast England in autumn, the size and extent of the 1983 movements were greater than any previously reported. The movement was observed mainly in the counties bordering the English Channel and in East Anglia, but observers as far north as Perthshire remarked on the increased numbers of Jays and presence in areas where they were previously unknown. The purpose of this paper is to describe the movements, so far as possible in a quantitative way, and to suggest a link with the widespread and severe failure of the acorn crop in 1983, both in Britain and on the Continent.

Methods

An appeal for information was made to all county recorders in England and Wales, and published in *British Birds* and *BTO News*; information was also sought from recorders in Scotland and Ireland. The response was good, and well over 100 individual observers also sent reports. The records have been summarised by county, and, for the purposes of this paper, most counties have been arbitrarily grouped into larger areas (see fig. 1). The only exceptions to this are the coastal counties where the movements were most marked: Norfolk, Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall.

Counties are dealt with in the following order (see fig. 1):

1. Northeast: Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Durham, Cleveland, Yorkshire, North Humberside, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire
2. Lincolnshire and South Humberside
3. Northwest: Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Isle of Man
4. Norfolk
5. East Anglia (excluding Norfolk): Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdon
6. East Central: Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Berkshire, Greater London
7. Southwest Central: Somerset, Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire
8. Northwest Central: Shropshire, Staffordshire, Hereford and Worcester, West Midlands, Warwickshire
9. Wales
10. Kent
11. Sussex and Surrey
12. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight
13. Dorset
14. Devon
15. Cornwall
16. Scotland

One consideration must be borne in mind when looking at the results shown here. With a species such as the Jay, where flocks gathering (mainly) acorns are a well-established aspect of autumn behaviour, it is not always possible to separate 'local' birds from immigrants. In the counties which experienced the largest numbers, most of the movements were recorded at or near the coast, suggesting immigrants from elsewhere, and including identified Continental birds. In the more inland counties, some of the larger flocks were almost certainly 'local'. Where it seemed probable that two observers had counted the same birds, this was taken into account. In view of the huge numbers seen in some counties, however, it is almost inevitable that some overlap occurred. In contrast, it is likely that in areas, or on dates, where there were few observers, particularly at coastal sites, large numbers of Jays escaped detection.

The geographical spread of the movements, using different sizes of dots to show numbers of birds, is illustrated in fig. 2; in all cases, the number represents the highest single bird-day count at each site. For the counties where sufficient records were available, numbers of Jays were amalgamated to give approximate bird-day totals and these are shown as histograms (fig. 3). Where times are given, these are all in BST.

Descriptions of the movements by county

1. The Northeast

The most notable aspect of the movement in the Northeast was the small number of Jays seen coming in from the sea at five sites: Whitby, Scarborough, Filey, Flamborough and Spurn. On 9th October, 28 Jays flew in from the sea high over Whitby and continued inland heading W. On 11th, six at Flamborough Head were only the second record of Jays there; on the same day, 15 were seen at Spurn (only the twelfth record from there), ten of which arrived from the NW. Four of these flew out to sea until lost to sight, and six headed out over the Humber towards Grimsby. At



Fig. 1. Map of England and Wales, showing areas from which records of Jays *Garrulus glandarius* in autumn 1983 have been described (see text for details). Scotland is area 16 in the text

Scarborough, three Jays came in off the sea on 14th October heading W. Passage of Jays over the town, mainly in a northwesterly direction, was observed over the following ten days, totalling 67 bird-days, with a maximum of 22 NW in an hour on 19th October. At Filey, Jays were recorded flying in off the sea on October 19th (six), 20th (ten), and 23rd (six) and on November 5th (two) and 12th (three). Jays had never been recorded before at Filey. The peak numbers seen at Flamborough were 25 on 17th October, when Spurn recorded 30 Jays (ten of which flew in off the sea heading NW). The peak at Spurn occurred two days later, when 39 were present, including one flock of 14 in from the sea heading NW; these were later seen heading S along the point. Spurn recorded a total of 95 bird-days for Jays in October; Flamborough's total was 75 bird-days.

Away from the coast, the movement was less noticeable, although some sizeable numbers were seen. The first indications were in late September, when 12 Jays moved SW at Knaresborough on 24th. On the following day, 17 flew S high over Fairburn Ings and, farther south in Nottinghamshire, a party of 15 headed W over Hoveringham Gravel-pits. For the next two days, abnormal numbers of Jays appeared in several gardens around Mansfield, totalling about 35 (up to five in a garden). Elsewhere in Nottinghamshire, a forester reported unusual numbers of Jays seen in open country during the last week of September.

Early in October, 33 moved S over Settle and 31 W over Hallam Moors, Sheffield, both on 2nd. The same day, a flock of 15 was seen flying over

Holme Pierrepont Gravel-pits, Nottinghamshire. The highest count in the Northeast was on 6th, when 58 flew W over Concord Park, Sheffield. Elsewhere in Yorkshire, there were 20 at Todwick and 27 in Parlington Park, Leeds, on unspecified dates in October. At Malham Tarn, 15 moved S on 13th; all these were said to be Continental on plumage, including one trapped for ringing. Over 25 Jays were seen at Wilsic, near Doncaster, on 22nd October. In Derbyshire, much higher numbers than usual were recorded, many being seen over open country away from breeding areas. The only sizeable movement was of 35 or more seen on 11th November moving S over Dronfield in two hours, but 13 (plus eight dead on a gibbet) seen at Scarcliffe on 10th December was 'easily the largest midwinter count here'. Late in November, 28 or more were present at Watchwood Plantation and Foxcovert Plantation Reserve, near Nottingham, on 23rd. One Yorkshire observer reported '... gamekeepers in the Malton district ... complained about the massive increase of Jays ... which they have had to shoot'.

Although the effects of the movements were apparent farther north, in Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Durham and Cleveland, no sizeable numbers were reported, the largest being 15 at Dipton, Durham, on 22nd November.

2. *Lincolnshire and South Humberside*

Jays are normally very rare on the Lincolnshire coast (G. P. Catley *in litt.*), but they were not so in October 1983. The majority were seen along 16 km of coast between Donna Nook and Mablethorpe, during 8th-19th October. In this area, day totals of 20 or more Jays were recorded at Donna Nook on 10th, North Somercotes Warren on 13th, Saltfleetby on 8th and 19th, Theddlethorpe on 8th and 18th (both times moving N) and Mablethorpe on 16th. A flock of 14 Jays came in over the sea at Saltfleetby on 8th heading NW. Farther north, along the south bank of the Humber, 16 flew W at a height of about 65 m over Barrow-on-Humber on 12th, and several flocks of 12-20 moved W over Winteringham around 18th. The only sizeable movement observed at Gibraltar Point was 45 flying S on 17th.

The total numbers of bird-days recorded in October at the four main sites were 84 at Saltfleetby, 70 at Theddlethorpe, 65 at Gibraltar Point and 61 at Donna Nook. Two small peaks in numbers, each with over 60 Jays seen in the county, were on 8th and 18th. Of six trapped for ringing at Donna Nook, none showed the characteristics of the Continental race *G. g. glandarius*. At Saltfleetby on 19th, M. J. Tarrant watched a flock of 17 feeding amongst seaweed at high-water mark on the foreshore. They picked up the seaweed and tossed it aside in the manner of Blackbirds *Turdus merula*. Beneath the seaweed were various wind-blown seeds.

3. *The Northwest*

The movement in the Northwest was not pronounced, but Jays were generally more widespread and slightly more numerous than usual. Only five counts of over 20 were reported. In Cheshire, the largest number seen was a flock of 17 at Risley Moss Nature Reserve, near Warrington, on 26th



Fig. 2. (a) Map of England and Wales showing locations (other than those in Devon and Cornwall) from which reports of 20 or more Jays *Garrulus glandarius* were received. The size of dot represents the highest bird-day total at each site, as indicated in the key. (b) Map of Devon and Cornwall, on larger scale, to show the more frequent records from those counties. Key as in (a)

September. During fieldwork for the 1983/84 Winter Atlas in Cheshire, higher numbers of Jays were recorded than in the previous two winters. In Merseyside, on three separate days between 11th and 18th September, flocks of 29, 31 and 34 flew S over Walton Hall Park, Liverpool, in the morning. At Gayton on the Wirral, 22 flew S on 25th September. During a journey from Liverpool to Anglesey along the A55 on 8th October, a continual southerly movement of small flocks of six to ten Jays was seen (between 07.00 and 09.30). In the Greater Manchester area, there was a small peak on 10th October, when 35 were recorded at Chorlton Meadows/Sale Water Park and 14 at Pennington Flash.

In Lancashire, the only high count was of 30-40 in one acre (0.4 ha) of woodland at Penwortham, Preston, sometime in October. A 'large influx' was noted in the Anglezarke-Rivington area in mid October. In the Fylde area, west Lancashire, where Jays are not known to breed, small numbers were recorded widely from mid October to the end of November, with a maximum of 12 at Naze Point, Freckleton, on 23rd October. The largest count in Cumbria was of 16 flying S over Sizergh Castle, near Kendal, on 28th September. No Jays were recorded in the Isle of Man.

4. *Norfolk*

The first signs of unusual numbers of Jays were on 24th September, with 21 at Snettisham and 35 flying W at Titchwell. A lull of six days followed, then on 1st October 43 came in from the sea at Wells, 40 flew W at Holme and 30 were seen at Paston. It was not until 10th October, however, that the first large flock was seen in the east of the county; on that date 100 (in two groups of 50) flew N at Reedham, one of the few sizeable inland records in Norfolk. On 12th, over 50 moved N at Moulton St Mary. The influx reached its peak in Norfolk on 13th October, when over 400 Jays were counted, most flying W along the north coast; 94 were seen in 10 minutes at Muckleborough Hill, Weybourne, 134 at Walsey Hills (mainly in the morning, largest flock 30), 63 in 15 minutes at Cley, 50 at Brancaster Staithe and 55 S at Snettisham. On the following day, over 300 moved W, again along the north coast, including 74 at Holkham in 20 minutes, 70 at Brancaster Staithe and 123 at Titchwell (including 86 in one hour). Interestingly, the next two days—a weekend—produced no sizeable counts other than 30 W at Holme on 16th.

Large numbers were again recorded on 17th, when 87 flew S at Winter-ton-on-Sea in an hour and 115 came in from the sea at Yarmouth (in groups of 20-30); on the north coast, 61 moved SW past Holme Bird Observatory. On 18th, 40-50 arrived from the sea between Weybourne and Sheringham. The next day, over 100 were at Stokesby and 138 at Snettisham. The influx in Norfolk ended abruptly on 20th, and no sizeable numbers were seen thereafter. Jays of the Continental race were caught and ringed at Happisburgh on 11th and 12th October.

To summarise the pattern for Norfolk, Jays were seen coming in over the sea on the east and north coasts. While some moved S or N along the east coast, most were seen flying W along the north coast, then S along the E shore of the Wash towards the Fens. The movement reached its peak on

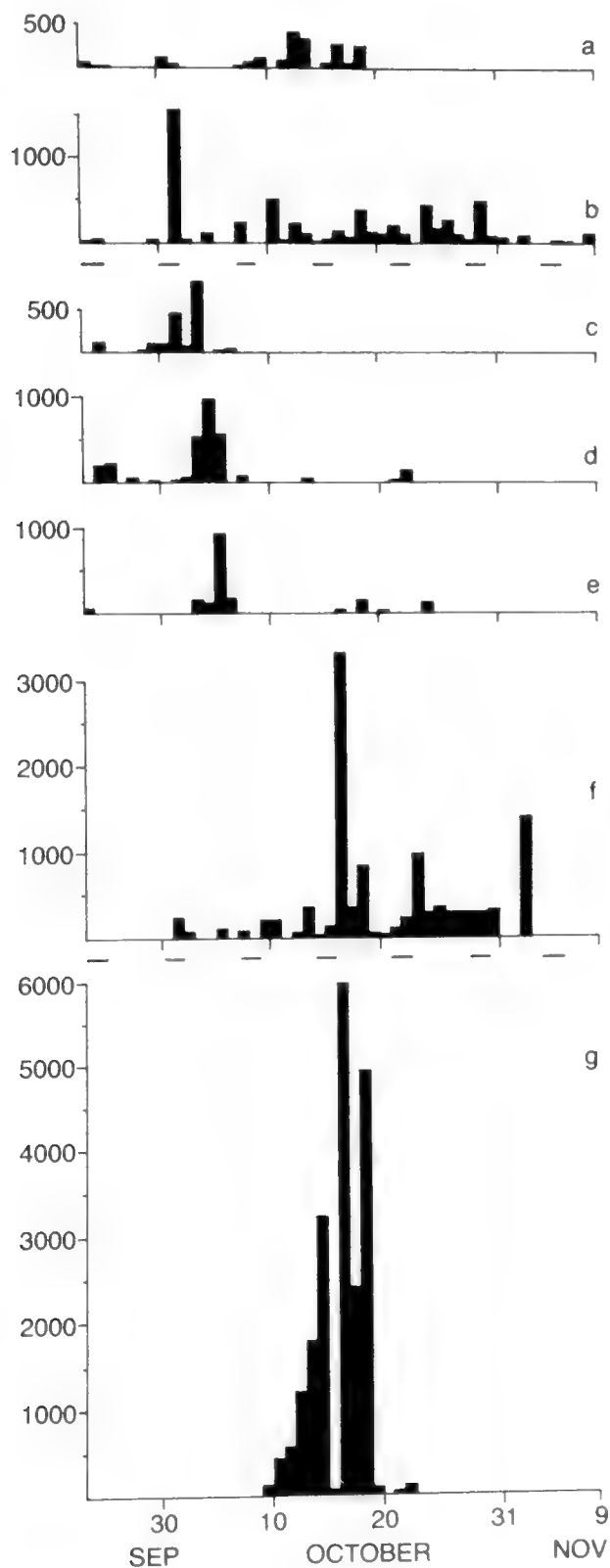


Fig. 3. Occurrence of Jays in eastern and southern England, shown as histograms, for the period 24th September to 9th November 1983. (a) Norfolk, (b) Kent, (c) Sussex, (d) Hampshire, (e) Dorset, (f) Devon, (g) Cornwall. Vertical axis represents bird-day totals; horizontal axis represents days. Horizontal bars below histograms for Kent and Devon indicate weekends

13th and 14th October; a total of nearly 1,900 bird-days was recorded in the period 24th September to 19th October. At four well-watched sites, the total number of Jays recorded was as follows: Walsey Hills 245 (6th-16th October); Titchwell 297 W (24th September-3rd November); Holme Bird Observatory 293 W (3rd-31st October); and Wolferton 198 S (23rd September-31st October).

5. *East Anglia (excluding Norfolk)*

The only Jays reported in September were eight over Havergate Island on 24th. Early in October, 35 were seen at Hollesley, Suffolk, and three came in over the sea at the Naze, Essex, on 2nd. Observers in Cambridgeshire recorded 15 flying W high over Milton on 2nd and 15 S over Earith on 5th. Just over 100 Jays were recorded on 8th, with 50 at Hainault, Essex, and in Suffolk 40 in the Benacre/Kessingland area and 11 flying in from the sea at Gunton/Lound. The next day, 30-40 were seen at Havering, Essex. At Colne Point, Essex, where the species is highly unusual, 24 were seen on 13th and flocks of 11 and 14 moved W on 17th and 19th, respectively. Jays seen flying in from the sea included six at Felixstowe Ferry on 13th and 12 at Gunton/Lound on 15th (a further 12 were seen near Gunton on this date).

Between Southwold and Kessingland in Suffolk, one observer logged small parties of Jays totalling 120 heading inland from the sea on 18th from 09.00-11.00. On 19th, a flock of 20 flew high to the SW over Milton. Two rather vague statements from near Lowestoft confirm the general increase in numbers: 'extraordinary numbers' at Sotterley on 30th October and 'saturated with Jays in October' from Somerleyton.

The largest number seen in East Anglia, including Norfolk, was about 200 at Fletton Brick-pits, just south of Peterborough, on 29th October. The date and location of this observation strongly suggest that these birds were part of the large numbers of Jays which moved S into the Wash after passing along the north Norfolk coast. Subsequently, in fieldwork for the 1983/84 Winter Atlas in the Peterborough district, Jays were noted as being much more widespread than in the previous winter.

6. *East Central*

Here the movement was first noted in Hertfordshire on 24th September, when 16 moved SW high over Tring. On the next day, 24 flew E at Cheshunt Gravel-pits, Hertfordshire, in 1½ hours. The largest passage through this area took place on 2nd October, when over 200 were recorded. About 100 moved W high over Shotover Country Park, Oxford, including one flock of 30. In Buckinghamshire, 95 were counted; these included flocks totalling 45 in two hours flying W over open farmland centred on Drayton Parslow, 20 at Ivinghoe and 21 W over Wendover Woods. The only other notable October counts were of 40-50 S over Stevenage, Hertfordshire, on 4th, and 50 at Shotover Country Park on 30th. In Leicestershire, although Jays were recorded in non-traditional areas, the only double-figure counts were of ten or more at Rutland Water on 22nd and 23rd October, and 11 just south of Leicester on 29th. The highest counts in Bedfordshire were of 18 flying over Fancott on 18th October and 19 at Luton Hoo Park on 4th

December ('normally only one or two in this heavily-kept locality'), but small parties were present and stayed for several weeks in places, such as Blunham, where Jays are usually absent. In early November, 43 flew W high over Towcester on 2nd; near Yardley Chase, also in Northamptonshire, 20 were present on 20th. Slight increases in the number of Jays were noticed in Berkshire, the maximum being up to 20 seen at Dinton Pastures in September and October.

Jays ascribed to the Continental race (seen at close quarters) were noted in Hertfordshire as follows: four at Digswell on 16th October, and one at Long Marston during 13th-16th November.

7. Southwest Central

An early movement was of 28 flying N over Sutton Bingham Reservoir, Somerset, at 15.00 on 24th September. No further signs of an influx were seen until 3rd October, when 19 flew S along the Longhope Valley, Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. On 4th, a flock of 25 passed over Wellington, Somerset, and a total of 40-50 (in ones and twos) was recorded flying SW over Devizes, Wiltshire, in the morning. The following morning, 40 moved W in two hours over Berwick St James, Wiltshire, and at 08.45 a flock of 34 flew W at Cotham Bridge, Bristol. Three observers in the Salisbury area counted over 200 moving W, including 160 W over Salisbury between 08.15 and 08.45, on 6th. This movement could well be connected with the large numbers seen on 5th passing W and NW over Southampton, only 34 km away (see Hampshire). Also on 6th, 29 headed SW in 15 minutes at Abbot's Leigh, Bristol. A lull occurred on 7th, then on 8th movements seen in Somerset included 32 N at Berrow in three hours from 07.00 and 49 W at Watchet in one hour from 07.45. During the next two days, a number of counts of 20 or more were recorded, including 30 N at Puriton on 9th and 31 at Berrow on 10th. A large flock of 115 was seen moving W over Stoford, Somerset, at 09.15 on 11th, and a further big count was of 125 W over Yeovil the next day. It is possible, even likely, that these last two observations, together with the records of 122 at Thornford on 6th and 115 at Clifton Wood on 7th (see Dorset), refer to the same large flock, since none of these sites is more than 6 km away from the others. They have, however, been counted separately for the purposes of the analysis.

During the following ten days (up to 22nd October), no sizeable movements were seen, but five sightings of 20-30 were recorded. These included 30 W at Sutton Bingham Reservoir on 14th and 22 flying over the Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, on 21st: the largest number seen in Gloucestershire. The next day, there were 50 at Steart, Somerset. The final day when larger-than-normal numbers were seen was 23rd October, when 76 flew NE in an hour at West Huntspill, Highbridge, Somerset, 40 were seen at Burnham-on-Sea, and 22 at Blagdon.

Although no further large numbers were recorded during the autumn, there was one very late report of note: 140 were observed flying W over Tisbury, Wiltshire, on 28th December.

8. *Northwest Central*

In the West Midlands area, Jays were much more numerous than usual in autumn 1983, parties of six to 12 being seen 'literally everywhere' (G. R. Harrison *in litt.*). The influx was first noted in late September, reached a peak around the end of October, and by mid November most had moved on. There were no reports of more than 12. In Herefordshire, too, the highest count was of 12 seen at Lyonshall in an hour on October 2nd. There were many sightings in Shropshire of small numbers of Jays in areas where they are usually absent or very scarce, the largest count being 25 at Shavington on 29th October.

9. *Wales*

The only sizeable numbers of Jays recorded in Wales were in the two southern counties of Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire, although there were several unusual reports from elsewhere. The records for South Wales will be dealt with here by county, from east to west.

In Gwent, where the normal size of autumn flocks is ten to 12 (W. A. Venables *in litt.*), visible passage is very unusual, and there were only three observations of note. Southward passage of Jays, totalling 45 or more (largest flock 16), was observed over Monmouth on one day at the end of September. On 4th October, 21 moved WSW over Caldicot in two hours, and on the following day a flock of 22 flew high above Pontypool.

By comparison with Gwent, the influx was well recorded in Glamorgan, where the Jay '. . . continues to increase' (1983 *Glamorgan Bird Report*). The first signs of higher numbers were 35 at Lavernock Point on 23rd September and 24 there on 30th. Most of these were coasting (in all directions), and none flew out to sea. The first few days of October were quiet, but on 5th 27 flew over Penylan in ten minutes and about 20 were at Creigiau 'in the first week of October'. The highlight of the Jay influx in Glamorgan came on 6th at Kenfig Pool (and dunes), where 118 or more flew NNW parallel with the coast (in flocks of 36, 20 and 62). The next day, one flock of 60 or more moved N over Kenfig and 28 flew over Nottage. Jays were last recorded at Kenfig (where they are normally scarce) on 27th October, with counts of 18 on 10th and 27 on 20th; a total of 252 bird-days was recorded in autumn 1983, compared with 22 in 1981 and none in 1980 or 1982. The last October report was of 15 at Sully on 29th. Nearly all the movements recorded were coastal; no influx was reported at well-watched inland sites such as Llanishen/Lisvane Reservoir and Ystrad Llwynypia. The 1983 Jay influx—the largest ever recorded in Glamorgan—lasted from 20th September to 29th October, and included a total of over 500 bird-days. Surprisingly, no signs of larger numbers were noted in Carmarthenshire, where the biggest count was of about 20 at Whitland during a Winter Atlas census at the end of November.

The only Welsh county other than Glamorgan to report large numbers of Jays in autumn 1983 was Pembrokeshire, where a total of well over 600 bird-days was recorded. The sole September count noted was 18 at Westfield Pill on 28th. As in Glamorgan, Pembrokeshire experienced peak numbers on 6th October, when 32 were seen on Skomer and 200 flew S at

nearby Martin's Haven. On the following day, there were 39 Jays at Strumble Head. A flock of 40 appeared in fields near St Dogmaels on about 15th October and remained in the vicinity for several weeks. On Skomer, 38 were present on 17th; the same number was noted on the island on 18th and 26th. At Strumble Head on 19th October, an observer watched 127 Jays flying W out to sea (and two NW) until they were out of sight. The nearest land to the west of Strumble Head is Carnsore Point on the southeast coast of Ireland, 90 km away. There were, however, no reports of unusual numbers of Jays in Ireland in autumn 1983 (K. Preston *in litt.*). Although Jays remained around until early December, subsequent counts never exceeded 25. These included 20 at Stackpole on 31st October, 25 at Aberiddy on 8th November and, at the end of November, 20 at Cemaes Head and 25 at Ceibwr. The last observation was of 25 at Heathfield on 3rd December.

Farther north, at the RSPB reserve at Ynyshir in Cardiganshire, the influx was first noted on 25th September, when 25 were present in the oak woodland. From then on, Jays were seen flying N over the reserve almost daily until 15th October, with a maximum of 50 on 12th. Thereafter 'numbers' were present in the woodland until the end of the month. Elsewhere in the county, several Jays were seen in October and November in the coastal villages of Aberporth and Aberarth where they are very rare, and 11 flew NE high over Llanerchaeron on 22nd October.

There were no unusual records from Montgomeryshire or Radnorshire (where the highest count was an unremarkable 16 at Builth Road on 22nd December). In northwest Wales, although there were no sightings of large numbers, several movements of interest were noted. At Great Orme Head, Llandudno, on 1st October, a flock of seven Jays flew due W out to sea heading for Anglesey. After about 100 m they turned and headed back inland along the headland. This was only the second time Jays had been seen there. During the weekend of 8th/9th October there was a regular passage of small parties (three to six birds) flying S over Anglesey, where the Jay is a scarce and local breeder. Elsewhere on Anglesey, small numbers (largest flock seven) were seen flying back and forth all day on 19th October near Brynsiencyn, in the southeast. At Llyn Alaw Reservoir, in the northwest of the island, a maximum of eight was seen on 14th November.

The only record of Jays at Bardsey Bird Observatory was of 19 on 29th October, including one flock of 13 flying in over the sea from the south. On the nearby Lleyn Peninsula, 15 were seen on 9th November.

10. Kent

The immigration of small numbers of Jays into Kent is a fairly regular feature in autumn, and small flocks can occasionally be seen arriving over the sea in September and October (Taylor *et al.* 1981). In 1983, the first movements were noted inland: at West Blean Woods, there were 20 on 24th September and 32 flew W high up the next day. Eighteen Jays flying W at Foreness on 30th September and four at St Margaret's on 1st October gave little hint of what was to follow.

On Sunday 2nd October, over 1,500 Jays were recorded in Kent. These

included 896 coasting SW at St Margaret's, 149 mainly S at Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory, 114 SW at Margate (in 28 minutes from 08.30), 112 SW at West Blean Woods (in three hours), 110 NW at Dungeness (at 09.30), 55 SE at Bough Beech and 52 W at Cliffe. Unfortunately, no migration watch was done in the Foreness area on 2nd; in view of the numbers seen there later in the month, it is likely that large numbers of Jays were missed. The movement at St Margaret's took place from one hour after dawn for the next three hours. Indeed, most movements timed during the influx throughout the country took place in the morning, especially during the first few hours after dawn.

Table 1. Daily totals of Jays *Garrulus glandarius* seen in Kent at the Foreness area, Thanet, and St Margaret's in October 1983 (data from I. P. Hodgson)

Locality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Foreness	0	17	46	5	108	0	8	19	0	0	274
St Margaret's	4	896	0	0	0	0	0	157	4	26	199
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Foreness	16	197	62	32	41	4	0	136	16	58	109
St Margaret's	16	23	48	0	7	139	57	248	83	50	53
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		
Foreness	41	0	221	43	181	34	0	230	20		
St Margaret's	41	12	201	113	74	54	35	40	45		

For the rest of October and into early November, large numbers of Jays were recorded in the county (see fig. 3), predominantly in the Foreness area and at St Margaret's (see table 1). Movement at these two sites occurred on different days; on some days when large numbers (over 100) were recorded at one, few Jays were seen at the other. Only on 30th October were substantial numbers recorded elsewhere: 102 moving N at Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory. On a further eight days in October (of which only three were at weekends), over 200 Jays were counted in Kent. The last sizeable movement was on 9th November, when 95 coasted SE at Foreness.

The presence or otherwise of trees seems to have strongly influenced migrating flocks (Hodgson 1983). At Sandwich Bay, few Jays were seen over the largely treeless estate, most being recorded from the Greenwall, a line of mature trees to the north of the Observatory recording area. Similarly, although large numbers were recorded at Foreness, and at Blean Woods (an inland site), a total of just three Jays was seen in 14 days at Reculver, a treeless area, 16 km west of Foreness, on the north Kent coast. Most of those seen at St Margaret's arrived from the northeast, often from high in the sky, and dropped into the valleys, where they moved steadily SW through the trees. On reaching the lighthouse at the southwest end of the valley, they turned due W and headed for the nearest visible trees. A watcher on the clifftop at Aycliffe, a treeless area southwest of Dover and due southwest of the top of the valley at St Margaret's, saw no Jays during this movement (I. P. Hodgson *in litt.*). This would tend to suggest that most of Kent's Jays arrived in east Kent, to the north of St Margaret's.

Although the belief is that these large numbers of Jays were immigrants from the Continent, none of the Jays recorded at St Margaret's or in the Foreness area was seen arriving from the sea. At Dungeness, the warden had difficulty deciding the race of those trapped (S. McMinn *in litt.*).

To summarise, the influx in Kent lasted from 25th September to 9th November, during which over 6,000 Jays were counted, with a peak of over 1,500 on 2nd October. Movement was predominantly southerly or south-westerly, and 80% were seen at Foreness and St Margaret's.

11. *Sussex and Surrey*

The first substantial numbers of Jays were seen on 25th September, when 119 were recorded in Sussex, mainly flying NE, at several sites. These included 26 flying N at a height of about 35 m over Pagham Harbour at 08.45, having been first sighted flying along the coast from Selsey Bill. The next movement of note was on 30th September, when 103 flew N at Hurst Green (19 km inland). On 1st October, 110 flew mainly W at four sites. The following day, a total of 465 was recorded, 286 of which moved N at Cissbury in two hours, and 52 headed W at Patcham. The next day, fewer were seen, the only count of note being 65 flying SE at Woodingdean. The migration reached its peak in Sussex on 4th October, two days later than the Kent peak; on that day, 819 Jays were logged, 733 of which moved S or W. These included 300 W at Beachy Head, 165 W at East Brighton Golf-course (comprising three flocks in 1½ hours: 29 at 08.47, 51 at 08.53 and 85 at 10.20), 122 W at North Brighton, 113 W at Parham and 52 E/NE at Church Norton (at 13.15).

As was the case in several other counties, the movement finished abruptly on 5th October, when the only count was 21 W at Fairlight. Thereafter, although Jays were more abundant and widespread than usual in the county, the only movements recorded were of occasional high-flying birds. Despite the influx in Sussex being relatively brief, nearly 2,000 Jays were recorded in total, a quarter of which moved N or NE and the rest mainly W.

In Surrey, the movement was seen mainly on two days. On 24th September, 40 Jays (including one flock of 17) flew SSE over Witley Common. The next day, over 80 Jays were seen in the county, including 31 at Frensham Common and 25 SSE over Witley Common.

12. *Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*

Usual numbers of Jays were seen in the county until the last week of September. On both 25th and 26th September, over 200 Jays were counted, with movements recorded in all directions. On 25th, 97 moved 'all ways' at Portsdown Hill, Portsmouth (27N, 28E, 24S, 18W), over 50 were seen at Timsbury (31 of which flew N) and 34 moved E at Titchfield Haven. The next day, 52 were seen at Portsdown Hill (40 of which flew S), 77 headed NE/E in 80 minutes at Chilling Wood, and 76 E at Brownwich Farm (the farm is only 0.6 km southeast of Chilling Wood, so these could have been the same birds).

During the next week, although a number of flocks of 20 or more Jays

were recorded, there was no significant movement. All this changed on 4th October, and for the next three days large numbers of Jays were seen moving W, mainly at Southampton, Weston to Warsash and Portsdown Hill. On 4th, 240 flew NW between Weston and Warsash, 90 NW at Portsdown Hill, 88 at Titchfield Haven (in four flocks, largest 42) and 42 W at Sinah Common, Hayling Island, in one hour. Peak numbers were recorded on 5th October, when about 500 moved W at Weston, 200 W at Portsdown Hill (including 165 in ½ hour, with one straggling flock of 86; the movement, however, not detected until 09.00) and 91 W (as well as 23 E) at Hook. The main movement on 6th was observed over Southampton itself, where one observer at Swaythling estimated 'over 500' passing W during the day; he counted 185 or more from 08.00 to 09.00 and 66 or more from 12.00 to 13.00. A further complementary count was of 97 heading NW over Southampton city centre in ¼ hour from 10.55. At Portsmouth, 91 Jays flew NW from Hayling Island past Eastney sewage-outlet and 48 headed W/N at Portsdown Hill, the last sizeable movement seen here.

Numbers dropped abruptly after 6th October, and the highest subsequent count was 61 W over Swaythling on 8th (25 at 09.00 and 36 at 09.45). On 22nd-23rd, a slight upsurge in numbers included sightings of 43 moving NE in 30 minutes at Camp Farm on 22nd and 45 S across Fareham Creek on 23rd. A late count was of 45 Jays passing W over the New Forest (9 km east of Ringwood) on 29th October.

Only two counts of note were reported from the Isle of Wight, both in November. On 1st 100 or more Jays were seen at Alverstone Garden Village, near Sandown, and 28 were at Osborne, East Cowes, on 20th.

To sum up, the 1983 influx of Jays in Hampshire lasted from 25th September until approximately 23rd October, during which a total of at least 3,400 bird-days was recorded. The main movement occurred during 4th-6th October, with a peak count of nearly 1,000 on 5th, one day later than the peak in Sussex. There were no comments on the plumage of Jays seen in Hampshire in autumn 1983.

13. *Dorset*

The first sizeable numbers were all seen inland: a flock of 46 at Compton Valence on 22nd September was followed two days later by 32 at Puddletown. It was, however, not until the first week of October—from 4th to 7th—that the main movement took place. On 4th, 100 coasted W at West Fleet, Abbotsbury, between 09.00 and 10.00, and 61 flew W at Stour Meadows, Sturminster Marshall. The next day, the only movements reported were 37 SW at Boscombe and 48 SE at Bimcombe Hill, Weymouth; in addition, 20 were seen at St Adhelm's Head. By far the greatest number of Jays—nearly 1,000—was recorded on 6th: 700 flew W at Bridport between 08.30 and 12.00 (largest flock 75) and, later in the day, 46 were seen feeding on the chalk downs between Bridport and Dorchester. Also on 6th, 122 moved W at Thornford from 09.00 to 11.00 (in ten flocks, largest 40, flying at a height of about 20 m) and 100 flew W at Radipole School. The three main counts on 7th were all from inland sites: 115 at Clifton Wood, 35 W at Thornford and a further 35 W over Martin Down

NNR on the Dorset/Hants border.

During the following ten days, several westerly movements of Jays were noted, particularly on 11th and 17th at West Fleet, and on 17th at Preston (36 W). An observer at Radipole School counted 126 heading W on 19th October. At Portland Bird Observatory, where Jays are rare (one in May 1981 was only the ninth Observatory record), two flew NW on 20th and they were recorded on a further 15 bird-days (maximum three) up to 4th November. The last two significant movements were on 25th, when 68 were counted at Durlston Country Park, including one flock of 49 flying E at 09.30, and 55 flew N at Studland Nature Reserve. At Durlston Country Park, Jay numbers reached a peak from 25th to 28th October, and large flocks persisted into November, with a maximum of 40 seen on 1st; at this site there were bird-day totals of 580 in October and 477 in November.

A total of nearly 2,000 Jays was recorded in Dorset, most moving W, from 22nd September to the end of October; highest numbers were seen on 6th October, one day later than the main Hampshire movement.

14. *Devon*

Unlike some of the coastal counties to the east, Devon recorded very few Jays in September, the only appreciable count being 23 at Axminster on 22nd. The first signs of anything unusual were on October 2nd, when small flocks of five to ten, totalling 114, were recorded during three hours in the morning, flying SW and W very high over Venn Ottery Common; at Little Haldon, 124 flew W in small loose flocks between 12.00 and 13.40, at a height of about 65 m. The next day, 76 passed W over Exeter from 10.00 to 10.30, and on 6th 90 headed W over the River Clyst at Topsham in 12 minutes. A further movement was noted at Venn Ottery Common on 10th when a total of 160-170 flew W or SW during the day (again flying high in small parties). On 11th, 60 moved W over Bullers Hill, Haldon, in ½ hour, 60 N at Jennycliff (Plymouth), and 75-100 were seen in the East Okement valley on the northern edge of Dartmoor. The next two days were comparatively quiet, but on 14th nearly 400 Jays were recorded, including 122 at Prawle, 60 SSW at Modbury, and a flock of 51 W at Colyton. Strangely, since it was a weekend, no large counts were reported on 15 or 16th.

On Monday 17th October, observers in the Plymouth area witnessed a huge westerly movement of Jays. At Jennycliff, just southeast of Plymouth, one observer watched a steady northwesterly movement of small groups (three to ten) between 08.30 and 09.45, which he estimated totalled approximately 1,000 Jays, including one quite compact flock of 500-600 at 09.10. The birds seemed to call continuously as they flew over. Two observers on Staddon Heights, immediately southeast of Jennycliff, counted over 2,200 Jays flying NNW (then heading W over Plymouth) between 10.30 and 15.00. Some attempted to fly W across Plymouth Sound, but were driven back by strong westerly winds. On Plymouth Hoe, where flocks had been seen moving W since 08.00, 635 flew W from 09.45 to 12.00, mostly at roof-top height, including one large flock of 280 at 11.45 (presumably the same flock was seen moving over Staddon Heights at 11.30). Jays were migrating over a fairly broad front, since 'large numbers'

flew W over Central Park, Plymouth, and 100-140 headed N and W at Crownhill, Plymouth, between 12.00 and 12.40 (these two sites are 2½ and 5 km, respectively, north of Plymouth Hoe). It is believed that well over 3,000 Jays moved W through Plymouth on 17th October. Elsewhere on the same date, 100 were present at Holsworthy.

Large flocks were not seen in coastal north Devon until the following day, when 300 Jays were seen in Anchor Woods, Barnstaple. On 19th, 300 or more were present at Hartland Point and 60 flew SW over Instow in 20 minutes. In the Plymouth area, 300 headed NNW over Staddon Heights in two hours, and 100 were seen at Brixton. For the next few days, there were few significant movements, 70 moving NNE over Powderham in 2½ hours on 22nd being the largest count. Then, on 23rd, 100 Jays, mainly in small groups, but with one flock of 50, moved W high (at 70-140 m) over Start Point in 2½ hours, and 78 flew N over Exminster marshes at 09.30 in groups of five to 15.

Nearly 1,000 Jays were recorded in the county on 24th October. In the south, over 400 passed SW over Newton Abbot and 84 NE at Slapton in three hours; in addition, 80 flew E over Devonport, Plymouth, at 07.30. In north Devon, 360 were counted at Barnstaple in 1½ hours. At Newton Abbot, 300-500 Jays passed SW in small numbers each day on 24th and throughout the following week. In late October, 57 were at Braunton Burrows on 26th, 'hundreds' were reported at Saunton and Combe Martin, and woods at Muddiford were described as 'full of Jays eating chestnuts'. In north Devon, Jays were first recorded flying out to sea on 27th October. On 29th at Baggy Point, Jays were flocking around the cliffs, some moving N along the coast. On 3rd November, a massive coastal movement was seen in north Devon. There were 800 or more at Woody Bay and 500-600 at Duty Point, both near Lynton; many of these were seen flying N out to sea. These were the last substantial movements recorded in Devon. Despite the large numbers on the north coast, none was reported from Lundy (18 km northwest of Hartland Point).

Only one observer commented on the race of those in Devon: one shot at Modbury in mid October was believed to be of the Continental race (S. C. Madge *in litt.*).

To sum up, the movement through Devon was first noted on 2nd October, and the last large flocks were reported in coastal north Devon on 3rd November. The peak day, when over 3,000 moved W over Plymouth, was on 17th October. In total, over 9,000 bird-days were recorded. To put the 1983 influx in Devon into perspective, the largest number previously recorded in the county was 27 in October 1975.

15. *Cornwall*

Jays are most common in the east and centre of the county, becoming progressively scarcer as one moves west (Penhallurick 1978). The invasion of Jays into Cornwall in October 1983 was notable both for the huge numbers involved—more than 1,000 Jays were recorded in the county on six days—and for the distribution: the vast majority were in west Cornwall.

The first real signs of the influx were not until 10th October, when 50

moved W at Trewey Common, Zennor, and 25 W over Saltash. On 11th, there were counts of 20 or more at eight sites, including 106 moving E over Penzance, a flock of 71 at Hustyn Wood, near Wadebridge, and 68 flying S at Cot Valley, St Just. The following day, 125 headed SW over Saltash, and 72 were present at Nanquidno, St Just. The first date on which over 1,000 Jays were recorded in the county was 13th October: 460 were seen on the Lizard, 200 (including one flock of 126) were present at Porthgwarra, 126 at Skewjack and, in the east, 119 moved SE over Millbrook in 15 minutes from 17.15 (in flocks of 15, 92 and 12). At Porthgwarra, the flocks flew up over Gwennap Head, where they climbed for several hundred metres as if to head out to Scilly, but, after flapping around for a minute or so at this height, they always flew back down into the valley, often 'whiffing' down out of the sky in the manner normally associated with Curlews *Numenius arquata* (D. S. Flumm *in litt.*); none was seen to fly out to sea. The next day, two observers in west Cornwall counted 196 Jays (in flocks of 79, 63 and 54) heading S over Nanquidno valley from 09.30 to 10.30; the two observers then moved N to Cot Valley, St Just, where they recorded 104 flying S between 10.40 and 11.40. A report of 300 or more heading S at Kenidjack Farm, St Just, on the same day probably refers to the same birds. In east Cornwall, also on 14th, 310 moved SE over Millbrook towards Maker Heights from 08.25 to 10.30, and a further 179 NE (09.00 to 09.45) from Mount Edgcumbe towards Plymouth. Other notable records on 14th were of 90 at Trevail, St Ives, 80 N at Mevagissey, and 80 or more moving S in scattered flocks over the Lizard.

A report on 15th October of about 2,000 Jays around or heading N over Housel Bay on the Lizard included 800 in a single field. A gamekeeper at Crafthole, not far west of Millbrook, counted 500 moving W during the day, the peak movement being 200 in ½ hour around 10.30. Other sizeable numbers seen that day included 350 at Porthgwarra and 300 N at Kenidjack, St Just. The following day (16th) was a Sunday. Despite this and the presence of many observers, particularly in west Cornwall (an American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* was present at Kenidjack Valley), the only movement observed was of 'large numbers' (similar to those on 17th) moving W at Kenidjack.

The movement reached its zenith in Cornwall, as in Devon, on 17th October. At Kenidjack Valley, 1,800 Jays moved W in an hour, including 1,000 in ten minutes; the observer left while the movement was still going on. At Trevescan, Sennen, near Land's End, an observer estimated 1,500 passing through his garden during the day, all heading NW. In view of these huge numbers present in the Land's End area, it is notable that not a single Jay was reported from the Isles of Scilly (only 40 km away), where there were large numbers of birdwatchers. Between 08.30 and 11.30, at least 500 were counted passing W over Rospeath, Marazion. They flew straight over at a height of about 30 m, none stopping to feed or rest, and none was seen carrying food. Elsewhere on the south coast, there were 200 or more at Porthgwarra, and 104 moved W at Drift Reservoir. In the other direction, 126 flew E in eight minutes over Penzance, continuing across Mounts Bay until out of sight. On the north coast, 200 or more moved W at

Hayle, and at least 770 headed W over St Ives between 11.15 and 13.35 (650 of these in 40 minutes from 11.15). Those seen at St Ives arrived from the SE and were silent and very closely approachable. A total of nearly 6,000 Jays was recorded in Cornwall on 17th October. Two shot near Sheviok, Torpoint, were given to S. C. Madge on 17th and both were sent to Tring for examination. One (an adult) was identical to Scandinavian birds of the nominate race; the other (a first-winter) was typically British (P. R. Colston *in litt.*).

Large numbers of Jays were still present in west Cornwall on 18th October, with the same observer at Trevescan again estimating a total of 1,500 heading NW throughout the day. At nearby Sennen, a separate observation was of a loose flock of 200 heading NW at 11.00. Other sizeable counts were 100 or more at Bosigran, Land's End, 186 at Porthgwarra and 315 moving SW over Saltash.

On 19th October, the last day on which exceptional numbers of Jays were present, nearly 5,000 were counted in Cornwall, over half of them on the Lizard. At Caerthillian about an hour after dawn, Jays began to appear to the south, and at least 1,600 were then counted heading NNW in just under an hour, after which very few were seen. Not far away, at Mullion, 1,000 were counted heading NW. Farther west, at Rospeath, Marazion, 200 or more moved W between 09.00 and 11.30. On the north coast, 468 headed W at Hayle and 230 flew W at Zennor. At St Just, near Land's End, 90 moved S at Nanquidno and 270 were recorded at Kenidjack. Two notable counts elsewhere in the county were of 132 flying N at Gerrans and

303. Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, Hertfordshire, April 1974 (E. A. Janes)



461 SW at Saltash. An observer on Trevoze Head at 08.50 watched a flock of 55 Jays heading out to sea, flying at a height of 200-250 m, directly into a force 6-7 NW wind. They made very slow progress and were eventually lost to sight over the sea, still heading NW. It is interesting to speculate as to the fate of these birds, since the next land in that direction is Ireland, and no unusual numbers were reported from there.

Very few Jays were recorded in Cornwall thereafter, the only counts of note being a flock of 100 in Mount Edgumbe Park on 22nd and 110 heading E at Par on 23rd.

To summarise the Cornish movements: the first signs of unusual numbers were on 10th October, and numbers rose sharply on 13th, when over 1,000 were recorded for the first time. Peak numbers occurred on 17th, with approximately 6,000 Jays being seen. Passage was predominantly in a westerly direction. Very few Jays were recorded in Cornwall after 19th October, with only two counts of about 100. Jays were recorded on a total of nearly 21,000 bird-days in Cornwall in October 1983.

16. *Scotland*

Increased numbers of Jays were noted, particularly in the east coast counties of Angus, Perthshire, East Lothian and Berwickshire; despite this, no count of 20 or more was reported in autumn 1983 from anywhere in Scotland. In late October, eight were at St Abb's Head on 24th and seven at Ayton Castle on 28th; seven flew S over Eyemouth on 18th November. In East Lothian, where there had been only three previous records this century, sightings included seven at Dirleton on 12th November and six at Tynninghame on 17th; at Seacliff Woods there were four on 3rd and 18th December. One Jay trapped at Dirleton on 24th November appeared to be a British bird on plumage. In Perthshire, 14 were seen at Pitlochry on 31st December. In western counties, increases were noted in Ayrshire (maximum 12 at Darvel on 18th December), Kirkcudbrightshire and Dumfriesshire.

An unusual passage of Jays, which was presumably connected with the influx, took place at Dirleton early in 1984. On 25th January, between 12.30 and 14.00, a total of 45 Jays (in parties of six to 20) flew W low over fields: the westerly movement was repeated the next day, this time totalling 80 Jays. No large numbers were seen subsequently.

An observation of interest, and not without some relevance to the occurrence of Jays in the Lothians in 1983, was made by Young (1984). He suggested that a very large temporary roost of 320 Jays seen 10 km south of Edinburgh, in Midlothian (where Jays are scarce), on 17th October 1982 may have consisted of Continental immigrants; numbers dropped rapidly to 123 on 18th, and to only 18 on 19th. No Jays were seen at this site during October 1983.

Return movements in spring 1984

There were several reports of unusual numbers of Jays in the spring of 1984, some of which presumably relate to return passage. It must be remembered, however, that spring gatherings are a normal part of the Jay's

behaviour: they consist of up to 20 or more birds and are most frequent from late February to late April in southern England (Goodwin 1976).

In east Cornwall, 30-40 Jays were seen feeding under trees in Mount Edgcumbe park on 19th April. In Devon, counts in excess of 20 were recorded at several sites. At Exminster Marshes, 53 moved N (in four groups) in 1¼ hours on 23rd April; 28 were seen at the nearby Exeter Canal on 28th April. Also on the Exe estuary, 33 flew N at Starcross on 10th May. Notable numbers of Jays were seen at two places in Dorset. At Durlston Country Park a total of 524 bird-days was recorded in March, April and May, compared with just 39 bird-days in the same period in 1983. At Portland Bird Observatory, there were 18 Jays on 14th May and 12 on 25th May.

On the Yorkshire coast, Jays were much in evidence. Spurn Bird Observatory recorded an unprecedented total of 262 bird-days between 20th April and 19th June, with a peak in numbers in late May and early June. None was seen flying in from or out to sea, either at Spurn or farther north at Flamborough Head. Although numbers seen at Flamborough were very low (only 12 bird-days between 22nd April and 17th June), they were still most unusual for this locality.

Previous records of movements of Jays in Britain

Cordeaux (1883a) quoted the earliest record, from Sheppard & Whitear (1826), of Jays flying in to Suffolk, 'some years' prior to 1826, and what appears to be the next report of extensive Jay movements, in 1876, when Gätke noted large numbers of Jays flying in a westerly direction over Heligoland (West Germany), for at least three days, during 21st-23rd October 1876. There is no record of these birds having reached England. In October 1880, a flock of between 200-300 appeared at St Margaret's Bay, on the Kent coast (Crichton 1880). Crichton also referred to 'extreme cold prevailing in the East of Europe' at this time. A further movement of Jays occurred during 6th-8th October 1882 on Heligoland, very similar to that of 1876 (Cordeaux 1883a). Cordeaux pointed out that Gätke's notes include no mention of Jays on Heligoland between these influxes. On both occasions, the movement took place in strong easterly winds. The movement of 1882 was also noted in the western half of north Lincolnshire (Cordeaux 1883b), Oxfordshire (Aplin 1883), north Northamptonshire early in the month (Lord Lilford 1883), and from woods on the western side of the River Avon, Hampshire (Corbin 1883), where increased numbers were present from 11th or 12th October to the middle of the month, but decreased by the end of the month. According to Witherby (1935), flocks were reported from Yorkshire to Kent in 1882. Gillham & Homes (1950) quoted Ticehurst's (1909) report of the arrival of 'immense numbers' of Jays in north Kent during 8th-15th October 1886.

During the 20th Century, an extensive movement of Jays has been reported in Britain or western Europe in each decade. Large numbers were again recorded in the woods west of the River Avon and in the New Forest, Hampshire, in the first half of October 1902 (Corbin 1902). This movement was also reported from Uckfield, Sussex, in the first week of October,

numbers remaining high into November, but decreasing later (Morris 1903), and from Bloxham, Oxfordshire, from 8th October, increasing to 29th and with even more in November and early December (Aplin 1903). In September-October 1910, an influx of Jays occurred in Kent and Suffolk, 'definitely ascribed to migrants from the Continent' (Witherby 1935), while in the following year, 1911, Jays were abundant in southwest Hampshire in late August or early September (Corbin 1911). Witherby (1935) also recorded an influx of Jays, again identified as Continental birds, in Norfolk in 1918. Ferns *et al.* (1977) quoted Ingram & Salmon (1939) in reporting a large flock of Jays at St Mellons, Gwent, in October 1923.

Boyd (1946) commented on an unusual flight of four Jays, SW, 'at a good height', in Cheshire in mid October 1930. He further commented that Jays were unusually common in late October 1931, mid October 1937 and late October 1941. Boyd also recorded a group of five seen flying S at a very considerable height near Kendal, Westmorland, in mid October 1937. These observations, he suggested, represent dispersal of the species. In this connection, it is relevant to note Frost's (1978) suggestion that occurrence of Jays in unusual localities, or flying 'very high as if on passage', may be explained by a poor acorn crop at the time.

Three Jays shot at Shoreham, Sussex, in December 1934 were attributed to the Continental race (Harrison 1935). In 1935, a large movement of Jays occurred in Hampshire and south Wiltshire, in early October (Witherby 1935). Increased numbers were seen near Newbury, Berkshire, in early November, but no unusual numbers were reported from Norfolk or Kent.

Twelve years later, in 1947, three Jays, identified as Continental birds, were recorded in very severe weather during March, in Yorkshire (Wagstaffe, Williamson & Bramley 1947), while a large number of Jays, again including identified Continental birds, appeared in Kent early in October (Harrison 1948). These Jays were reported from various places in Kent, with some southerly movements, and were noticed throughout October, and into November (Gillham & Homes 1950; Harrison 1948). Harrison's belief that this movement would extend to other counties was apparently confirmed, as Cohen & Taverner (1972) stated that in the winter of 1947/48 there were an estimated 2,000 on the Mottisfont Estate, Hampshire. Subsequently, Continental Jays were recorded in Kent in December 1947, and March and April 1948, suggesting that overwintering occurred (Harrison 1948).

In September-October 1957, there occurred the widely reported influx of tits and other species into Britain, analysed in great detail by Cramp, Pettet & Sharrock (1960). Jays were first reported in Kent and Sussex in mid September, with birds flying in over the sea, SW and NW into Kent, and N into Sussex. Numbers increased in the second half of the same month on the Kent coast, with some in Norfolk, while large numbers were seen on the Suffolk coast in late September and October. The largest numbers reported were 600-1,000 moving SW on 21st September at Ingatestone, Essex, with smaller numbers the next day. Unusual occurrences this autumn included six Jays near Dublin in late October, which overwintered there, while a flock of Jays flying over Hilbre on 4th October was the first record for the

island (Hardy 1966). Numbers seen in the West Country at this time may, it is suggested in the paper, have been the result of a good breeding season reported there. Similar unusual numbers reported in the Merseyside area (Hardy 1958) were also explained by good breeding success. In view of Harrison's (1948) observation on overwintering, Prendergast & Boys's (1983) record of 24 Jays at Portland Bill in May 1958 may relate to the 1957 influx.

Numbers of Jays were recorded in the London area in October 1959, and in 1961 (Homes, Cramp & Wallace 1964). Prendergast & Boys (1983) recorded over 40 at Brownsea Island, Dorset, in October 1972, and over 60 at Radipole Lake and Chapman's Pool, Dorset, in October 1977.

Discussion

Origin of the Jays

During the present century, and especially since the 1940s, Jays have shown a steady and widespread increase in Britain (Parslow 1973). This is believed to be due to a combination of several factors, including greatly reduced keeping and increased afforestation, particularly in Scotland. The effect of keeping is illustrated by the fact that over 50% of the recoveries of ringed Jays have been of individuals so killed (Hickling 1983). As a result of this increase, it is likely that Jays are now at a fairly high population level.

The population spread is only gradual, however, since there is limited dispersal of young birds. Holyoak (1971) cited only four movements of over 32 km of Jays ringed as nestlings or juveniles. The sedentary nature of British Jays was confirmed by Mead & Hudson (1984), who found that 98% (271 out of 276) of those recovered between 1972 and 1981 were within 50 km of their ringing site. In contrast, in the period October 1983 to May 1984, seven of the 39 Jays recovered (18%) had moved over 50 km, reflecting their increased mobility.

Although there is no ringing evidence to involve Continental Jays in the movement of 1983, a Jay trapped at Dungeness in October 1955 was recovered in the Netherlands in June 1956. There is no doubt that some reached Britain from the Continent in autumn 1983, since Jays were seen coming in over the sea at a number of East Coast sites. While many of the Jays seen in east Kent were believed to have crossed from the Continent, none, however, was actually recorded coming in off the sea, except for those at Dungeness on 2nd October.

Some observers described the Jays they saw in autumn 1983 as 'Continental', but the question of precisely what is a 'Continental' Jay is a difficult one. The Jay shows a gradual change in plumage colour from east to west across its range, becoming progressively more rufous westwards, with the most rufous birds in Ireland (see Coombs 1978). Individuals with the different plumage types occur in all populations, however, but Dr C. J. O. Harrison (*in litt.*) believes that it is generally safe to describe birds which are pinker, greyer and paler than our usual Jays as 'probably of Continental origin'.



304. Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, German Democratic Republic, September 1977 (*Günter Rinnhofer*)

The location and timing of the Jay movements in autumn 1983 suggest that, although some Continental birds were certainly involved, their numbers were greatly swelled by British birds moving, we believe, in search of food. The main pattern of movement is shown in fig. 3. Beginning with large numbers in Kent in early October, a predominantly westward movement of Jays was observed along the English south coast. Peak numbers were recorded progressively later in October westwards, culminating in the huge numbers present in Devon and Cornwall during 17th-19th October. In most counties, the large flocks rapidly moved on westwards or dispersed, and Jay numbers apparently returned to normal levels soon after.

Food and feeding of Jays

Jays are adaptable feeders and their diet includes acorns and other nuts, wild fruits and seeds, grain, insects, eggs and nestlings of small birds, and small mammals (Holyoak 1968; Bossema 1979). Acorns, however, form an important part of the diet for much of the year, particularly in autumn and

winter. As well as feeding heavily on acorns in autumn, Jays store large numbers of them (several thousands per bird) for use later in the winter, spring and even early summer (Bossema 1979). The Jay has a specially enlarged oesophagus which enables it to transport acorns (up to nine at a time, the last one usually carried in the bill). It also carries beech mast and hazel nuts in the oesophagus, and stores them, in the same way. Nilsson (1985) has shown that, in south Sweden, Jays store beech mast only when acorns are not available, and he specifically quotes this as occurring in 1983. Bossema (1979) suggested that there is a 'symbiosis' between oaks and Jays, the trees benefiting from the Jays' widespread planting of acorns, many of which germinate into seedlings, while the Jays benefit by using not only acorns as food, but also collecting defoliating caterpillars to feed their nestlings.

In autumn 1983, there was a severe and widespread failure of the acorn crop, but such failures have occurred previously. Jones (1959) stated that both sessile oak *Quercus petraea* and pedunculate oak *Q. robur* fruit with great irregularity, uniformly heavy crops occurring about once in six or seven years, moderate crops about once in three or four years, while 'years in which there is an almost complete failure to produce seed are frequent'. The Seeds Section of the Forestry Commission reported a 90% failure of acorns in 1983, both in Britain and on the Continent (A. F. Mitchell *in litt.*). Comments on the state of the acorn crop were made by observers from many areas, including Lancashire ('virtually nil'—Burnley), Wales ('very poor year'), Essex ('very scarce in local woodlands'—Bradwell), Kent ('almost complete failure'—Petts Wood), Hampshire ('negligible'—Portsdown Hill) and Devon ('almost nil'—Ashclyst Forest). Probably more than one reason contributed to this failure. Jones (1959) suggested that, while a warm late summer and autumn encourage the production of flower buds, and abundant seed in the following year, cold weather the following spring may destroy the flowers. These descriptions fit the weather for July to October 1982, and April and May 1983 (Meteorological Office 1983, 1984). The European weather was described as exceptionally dull and chilly in spring 1983 (Lecomte 1984; Jones 1983). It is possible, therefore, that the number of acorns was reduced at the time of flowering. Developing acorns are subject to attack by several insects. Even in a good seed year, as many as 25% of acorns may be damaged by insects, principally weevils of the genus *Curculio* and larvae of the tortricid moth *Cydia* (= *Enarmonia*) *splendana* (Jones 1959). In a poor seed year, the proportion of seed infested by insects is much higher, Jones (1959) quoting figures of up to 50% damaged. During recent years, another cause of acorn loss, the cynipid wasp *Andricus quercuscalicis*, which induces the so-called 'knopper' galls on acorns, has spread over much of southern England, and is now causing considerable damage to acorns. Again, it is likely that the proportion of acorns infested will be higher in poor seed years. In autumn 1983, a high rate of galling (about 75%) by this wasp was '... more or less universal south of a line from the Humber to the Severn' (M. J. Crawley *in litt.*). It seems likely, therefore, that the poor acorn crop began primarily as a result of natural failure due to climatic reasons, and that the small number

of developing acorns was secondarily reduced by proportionately higher than usual infestation by damaging insects. Direct competition for the available acorns must occur from other vertebrate consumers, such as squirrels and the Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*. Jones (1959) suggested that the Woodpigeon probably consumes a greater proportion of the acorn crop in England than any other animal, and quoted R. S. Troup in stating that a Woodpigeon can carry up to 60-70 acorns in its crop, and consumes twice this number daily.

As a result of the scarcity of acorns, Jays were seen in autumn 1983 feeding on a wide variety of other foods. These included sweet chestnuts *Castanea sativa*, beech mast *Fagus sylvatica*, acorns of holm oak *Quercus ilex*, blackberries *Rubus fruticosus*, and berries of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, ivy *Hedera helix*, yew *Taxus baccata* and sea buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides*.

Although this account has been restricted to the Jay movements in Britain, there was a similar acorn failure on the Continent. Despite the large numbers of Jays seen in southern England, no sizeable movements were reported from France or Belgium (P. S. Redman *in litt.*). None was seen at Cap Gris Nez, where 400 Jays were recorded coasting W in October 1955 (Redman 1956). An invasion of Jays was reported in Switzerland in autumn 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 591). In Poland there was a report of large numbers of Jays moving W across the frontier (C. J. Mead *in litt.*). At two Polish migration stations on the Baltic coast, Mierzeja Wislana (54° 21' N 19° 19' E) and Bukowo-Kopan (54° 28' N 16° 25' E), a marked westerly and southwesterly passage of over 1,600 Jays was seen between 28th September and 17th October, the main movement being from 28th September to 2nd October, when over 800 were recorded (P. Busse *in litt.*). There was a large irruption of Jays in southern Sweden in late September and October 1983. About 10,000 migrated W to NW at Vänernsviken, Västergötland, in the last week of September and the first week of October. During the week around 20th September, about 3,000 were counted at Karlshamn and about 1,300 at Araslövssjön, both in the southeast. At Getterön, on the west coast, 1,500 flew N on 25th September and 500 S on 1st October. At Falsterbo, only 100 were seen (P. Alström *in litt.*).

Similar movements have been recorded in the past (e.g. during the 1957 influx into Britain), suggesting that movements here are related to those on the Continent. Coupled with the increased Jay population, however, the failure of the acorn crop would probably be more apparent than in earlier years, when Jays were scarcer. Similarly, it is possible that, assuming the Jay population remains high and the parasitic wasp *Andricus quercuscalicis* continues to spread, future acorn crop failures could result in similar extensive Jay movements.

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Summary

Large numbers of Jays *Garrulus glandarius* were recorded, mainly in southern England, in autumn 1983. Although the largest numbers were seen during October, in Norfolk and the English south coast counties from Kent to Cornwall, there were reports of unusually large flocks of Jays from many counties in England and Wales. Movement was predominantly in a westerly direction, and Jays were reported flying in over the sea at several East Coast sites. The highest numbers were seen in Devon and Cornwall during 17th-19th October, after which few large flocks were reported. These movements were probably in response to a severe failure of the acorn crop in autumn 1983, both in Britain and on the Continent.

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European news

We are delighted to record that this selection includes a contribution from Morocco. We had invited the national authorities in a number of North African and Middle Eastern countries to nominate an official correspondent and to supply regular six-monthly notes for selective inclusion in this feature. We are, however, for the present, retaining the title 'European news' since we believe that ornithology is not yet quite sufficiently organised in some countries for us to aim to produce a comprehensive six-monthly 'West Palearctic news'. That is, however, a possible long-term aim, and we welcome offers of regular contributions from the national societies in countries not yet included.

This eighteenth six-monthly selection also includes contributions from 20 European countries. The official correspondents whose detailed six-monthly reports are summarised in this feature are acknowledged at the end of this contribution. This feature is intended as a news service; anyone requiring further information or quoting records in other publications should refer to the literature of the relevant country. If you have made observations in any of the countries included here and do not know to whom records should be sent, we suggest that you send a copy to the relevant 'European news' correspondent listed at the end of this summary, who will pass your records on to the correct person.

Records awaiting formal verification by national rarities committees are indicated by an asterisk(*).

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single individuals

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica* MOROCCO
First record since 1895: off Témara near Rabat on 6th January 1985.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* SWEDEN
High numbers: 22 in 1984 (22 also in 1983), most in October (seven).

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* SPAIN
First record for Canary Islands: Arinaga, Gran Canaria, on 12th November 1984.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys* MOROCCO
First and second records: adult flying south off Tamri, north of Agadir, on 17th March 1983, and adult flying southwest at El-Harbours near Rabat on 13th September 1984. SPAIN
Correction: record in August 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 358) accepted only as albatross *Diomedea*.

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* MOROCCO
First record: found dead ashore in Moulay-Bouselham on 12th January 1985.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* MOROCCO
Sixth record: flying north off Cap Rhir, north of Agadir, on 6th August 1983.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* MOROCCO
Large northerly movements: over 21,000 passing Cap Rhir in 86 hours 20 minutes during 6th-23rd August 1983, probably feeding movements from colonies on Selvagens Islands.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* SWEDEN
Second and third records of *P. p. mauretanicus*: Varberg on 30th August 1984 and Halmstad on 7th October 1984*.

Madeiran Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* FRANCE
First record: found dead after hurricane 'Hortense' in Ardèche in September 1984.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* ESTONIAN SSR
Second breeding: up to 40 individuals on islet in Väinameri in 1985, but nests not counted (first breeding was in 1984, *Brit. Birds* 78: 338).

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* MOROCCO
Largest-ever winter concentration: 55 at Sebkha-Bou-Areg lagoon on 20th January 1985. SWITZERLAND
Sixth record: immature near Basle on 25th September 1984.

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* MOROCCO
First record: Ouarzazate Dam from 13th February to 3rd April 1983.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* MOROCCO Fifth to eighth records: light-phase at Oued Massa estuary on 20th July 1983, dark-phase at Skhirat on 12th May 1984, dark-phase at Oued Yquem estuary during 23rd-28th May 1984, and light-phase at Sidi-Moussa near Oualidia on 6th October 1984 (cf. recent records in Austria, France, the Federal Republic of Germany and Greece, *Brit. Birds* 77: 233, 586; 78: 338).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* ITALY Increased breeding numbers: 965 pairs in 11 colonies in 1984 (675 pairs in same colonies in 1981). MOROCCO First breeding record: two occupied nests at Ouarzazate on 13th May 1984, at least one young reared. SPAIN First breeding in eastern half of Iberia: at least 14 nests in reed-beds of Albufera de Valencia in spring 1984, and several young reared.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* LUXEMBOURG First summering record: three adults (one probably first-summer) present throughout summer 1985; no proof of breeding (cf. spring/summer records in Belgium since 1979 and recent breeding in France and Belgium, *Brit. Birds* 77: 587).

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* SWITZERLAND Total of 109 pairs at occupied nests (106 of them near sites of reintroduction, where they are fed) in 1984, 61 of them successfully rearing young.

Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* MOROCCO Population census in spring 1982: 380 individuals at 15 sites, but only 93 breeding pairs in 12 colonies, mainly in southwest.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Second and third breeding records: at new reservoir in southern Moravia, four nests, three with eggs in 1984, and four nests, two with eggs (but later flooded) in 1985; first breeding was in southern Moravia in 1949.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* MOROCCO First record: three at Marja Zerga from 3rd January to 5th February 1984, two remaining until 9th March.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* GREECE Winter influx: large numbers in north, including 115 on Lake Mitrikou, in January 1985.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* GREECE Largest number since 1969: over 25,000 on Evros Delta on 6th March 1985.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* POLAND Fifth or sixth record: adult and immature north of Wrocław on 4th November 1984, one of them found injured on 7th November; origin uncertain.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* GREECE Largest-ever number: 2,000 on Evros Delta on 6th March 1985.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* MOROCCO First record: Oued Sous estuary on 12th and 23rd March 1984, then at Oued Massa estuary on ten dates from 23rd March to 12th December.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* YUGOSLAVIA Second record for Slovenia: male at Bled on 22nd March 1978.

Mandarin *Aix galericulata* MOROCCO First record: pair in the Rif at Al-Anasar pond on 9th January 1984.

Wigeon *Anas penelope* MOROCCO Most abundant wintering duck: 28,400 in January 1983, 18,600 in January 1984, and 26,500 in January 1985 (about 85% on lagoon of Merja Zerga).

American Wigeon *Anas americana* MOROCCO First record: male at Oued Massa on 27th-28th December 1984, subsequently three males and two females on 29th-30th December, two males and one female on 22nd January 1985, and two males during 24th-27th February 1985.

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* SPAIN First record: adult male in Valencia on 19th January 1983* (cf. eighth French record, on 26th March 1983, *Brit. Birds* 76: 567).

Teal *Anas crecca* MOROCCO Second record of *A. c. carolinensis*: male at Oued Massa on 25th and 27th April 1984.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* MOROCCO Fourth record: two separate pairs at Oued Massa estuary on 12th and 16th March 1983. POLAND First record: male in breeding plumage at Trzciana near Rzeszów on 9th April 1984.

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* GREECE Fifth record: female on Naxos Island on 1st May 1984. MOROCCO Highest-ever counts of wintering flocks: 1,680 in January 1982, 1,000 in January 1983 and 1,400 in January 1984, all at Sidi-Bou-Rhana. Breeding-range extension: southwest of previous known range, first proof of breeding at Oued Massa estuary in 1982, at least five broods in spring 1984; and pair with young at Oued Saquiat-Al-Hamra at Layoun (former Spanish Sahara) on 23rd April 1985.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* SWITZERLAND First breeding record at Lake of Geneva; national total of nine broods at six sites, in 1984 (cf. range expansion or increases in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, *Brit. Birds* 77: 587).

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* MOROCCO Third and fourth records: male at Oualidia on 25th February 1984, and male at Oued Massa on 19th October 1984.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* SPAIN First record: immature male in Corme-Laxe during 22nd January to 5th March 1983*.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* BELGIUM First suggestions of breeding: pair on lake in east until July, display, copulation and prospecting of nestbox noted. MOROCCO Fourth record: Oualidia lagoon on 22nd November 1984*.

Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* FINLAND First record: shot in Pori in 'about 1910'.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* ESTONIAN SSR Most-successful breeding season for 20 years: 14 occupied nests, 12 young fledged from six nests (3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 1). FINLAND Improved breeding success: 24 young fledged in 1985 and 30 in 1984 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 74: 260); population about 50 pairs. (Cf. increases in Norway and as winterer in France and Greece, *Brit. Birds* 78: 340.)

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* SWITZERLAND Seventh record: in Jura on 11th September 1984 (sixth was in April 1983, *Brit. Birds* 76: 567).

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* MOROCCO Third confirmed breeding record since 1950s: young in nest near Fès in May 1984. POLAND Fourth or fifth post-1945 record: weak immature caught near Racibórz on 1st June 1984.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* LUXEMBOURG First brood for 40 years, and probably first-ever successful breeding: three young fledged in early August 1985.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* MOROCCO Eleventh record: male at Merja Zerga lagoon on 13th January 1985.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* FRANCE Small influx: ten to 12 in Alsace in January-February 1985. LUXEMBOURG Influx: 'unusually large number of sightings' during late February to late April 1985. (Apart from high numbers in Finland in October 1982, there has been no report of an influx in Europe since winter 1978/79, *Brit. Birds* 73: 258; 76: 273.)

Tawny/Steppe Eagle *Aquila rapax* FINLAND Seventh record: Harko on 5th October 1984 (sixth was in May 1984, *Brit. Birds* 77: 588).

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* NETHERLANDS Only record (1963/64) now rejected.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* NETHERLANDS Both records (1964 and 1979) now rejected. SWEDEN Ninth record: Skåne during 26th-28th September 1984.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* FRANCE First inland breeding: pair in 1984 and 1985 in 'centre'. MOROCCO First census of Mediterranean coast: 18 breeding pairs along 75 km of coastline in June 1983; three new nests discovered in spring 1984 and 1985; Moroccan population appears to be the largest in the Mediterranean region.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* MOROCCO Tenth record: male near Fès on 5th-6th May 1984.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* FRANCE Breeding: at least one pair bred on Mediterranean coast in 1984. POLAND Second record: Pławniowice near Katowice on 29th September 1984 (first was in September 1982, *Brit. Birds* 76: 273).

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* FINLAND Poor breeding success: 58 nestlings in 47 territories in 1985: 1.2 per territory compared with about 2 in 'normal' years.

Hazel Grouse *Bonasa bonasia* NETHERLANDS Only record (1888) now rejected.

Corncrake *Crex crex* SWITZERLAND Dramatic decrease: only one singing male in 1984.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* MALTA Second and third breeding records; two separate pairs in spring 1985 (first was in spring 1984, *Brit. Birds* 77: 588).

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryla alleni* MOROCCO Fourth record: adult at Oued Massa estuary on 4th April 1985 (only recent European records were in Spain in December 1975 and in Finland in May 1979, *Brit. Birds* 71: 584; 73: 575).

Crane *Grus grus* MOROCCO Winter censuses: during 1982/83-1984/85, more than 2,000 wintering, south to Marrakech and Agadir, but mostly (1,500) in north.

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* MOROCCO Small population (about 20 individuals) still exists in Middle Atlas; pair displaying and mating in spring in 1983 and 1984, but apparently no young reared because of high level of human disturbance.

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* MOROCCO More than 250 individuals of this threatened (and protected!) species were killed, by hunters from the Middle East, in eastern and southern Morocco between January 1984 and January 1985.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda* LATVIAN SSR Fifth record: spring 1985*.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* POLAND Fourth record: two at mouth of River Vistula on 30th August 1984.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* NETHERLANDS Third record: Den Oever from 7th August 1985 onwards* (note that since 1978 there have been the first to sixth records for Britain & Ireland, third for France, fourth to sixth for Malta, first to third for the Netherlands, first for Norway, second to fourth for Poland and fourth for Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 75: 27; 78: 341).

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* FRANCE Second record: almost full summer plumage in Aude on 26th April 1985* (since 1978, there have been records in Italy, Malta, Norway and Romania; the first French record was in August 1980, *Brit. Birds* 76: 274; 78: 341).

Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* POLAND Third record: near Jastarnia on 16th November 1984.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* SPAIN Fifth record: near Barcelona on 21st December 1984*.

White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura* MOROCCO First record: adult at Oued Massa estuary during 24th-28th December 1983.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* NETHERLANDS All three records (1969, 1972 and 1974) now rejected.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* NETHERLANDS The 1983 record (*Brit. Birds* 76: 568) is now first, not second, following rejection of 1971 record.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* NETHERLANDS Only record (1953) now rejected.

Redshank *Tringa totanus* YUGOSLAVIA First breeding record for Slovenia: pair with two young on 18th June 1985.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* NETHERLANDS All six records during 1964-80 now rejected.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* SPAIN Second record: Torremolinos on 14th May 1982 (first was in August 1979, *Brit. Birds* 73: 258).

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* FINLAND Third record: male in Söderskär bird sanctuary on 26th June 1985. SPAIN Second record: Avilés on 25th and 28th August 1984.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* SWITZERLAND First spring record: adult male in central Switzerland during 10th-11th June 1984.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* MOROCCO Third 20th-Century record: lagoon of Khnifiss on 26th April 1985.

Gulls *Larus* ITALY First winter census: 207,029 individuals of 12 species in 1984.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* BELGIUM Largest west European colony: 15 pairs at Zwin Reserve in 1985. CZECHOSLOVAKIA Third breeding record: three nests in 1984 at reservoir in southern Moravia (first and second records: *Brit. Birds* 77: 237). FRANCE Winter census: 1,823 in January 1984. MOROCCO Winter census: 415 on Atlantic coast between El-Jadida and Qualidia in January 1984. SPAIN First breeding: adult incubating nest with three eggs in colony of Audouin's Gulls *L. audouinii* on islet off Mallorca on 13th June 1984; since only one adult seen, there is possibility of hybridisation with an Audouin's Gull.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* FRANCE Sixth record: first-winter in Loire-Atlantique in March 1985*.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* SPAIN Second record: Torremolinos on 29th October 1983.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* SWITZERLAND Seventh record: adult at Klingnan Reservoir on 20th September 1984.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* NETHERLANDS First record: adult at IJmuiden on 4th August 1985* (one in 1960 and two in 1975 now rejected).

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* FRANCE Winter census: about 1 million in January 1984.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* MOROCCO First proof of breeding since 1967: 12 nests with eggs near Tarfaya on 19th July 1985. SPAIN First winter records: 15 in Córdoba on 7th-8th January 1982; 35 on Ebro Delta on 23rd January 1983; 16 on Ebro Delta and 87 near Huelva in January 1984.

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* MOROCCO Winter census: 766 in January 1984, south to Agadir, but mostly (737) on Mediterranean coast. First mainland breeding: 20-25 pairs near Al-Hoceima in spring 1983-85.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* MOROCCO First to third records: Essaouira on 11th August 1982 and 10th April 1983, and first-winter at Akhirat near Rabat on 5th February 1985. POLAND First record: second-

summer at Sopot in Gdansk Bay on 5th April 1984. **SPAIN** Second record: Ebro Delta on 18th and 20th February 1984*. (Cf. recent records in Britain & Ireland, France, Federal Republic of Germany and Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 75: 27, 571; 76: 568; 78: 327-337.)

Common Gull *Larus canus* **AUSTRIA** First breeding record in eastern Austria: pair suspected in 1984 at Illmitzer Zicksee, confirmed in 1985.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* **BELGIUM** First breeding records: one pure pair and two mixed pairs (with Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*) at Zwin Reserve in 1985. **MOROCCO** Winter census: most abundant gull, with 22,000 in January 1984, 95% on Atlantic coast from Tangier to Agadir.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* **FINLAND** Largest-ever spring concentration: over 30 at Kotka refuse dump in early April 1984. **MOROCCO** Fourth record: third-winter at Skhirat on 6th January 1985.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* **GREECE** Fifth record: adult on Evros Delta on 7th March 1985.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* **MOROCCO** Exceptional wreck: 2,500 estimated stranded on shore on Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts from 20th January to mid March 1984. **SPAIN** Wreck: beached bird surveys in January-February 1984 revealed 1,455 corpses on Atlantic coast (where usually very few) and 24 on Mediterranean coast (usually none); also frequent inland reports. (Cf. exceptional wreck in Portugal in December 1983 to January 1984, *Brit. Birds* 77: 589.)

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* **NETHERLANDS** Only record (before 1815) now rejected.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* **FINLAND** Declining: 800 pairs in 1984 census, 30% less than in 1970s.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* **FRANCE** Winter census: 146 in January 1984.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* **PORTUGAL** Strong spring passage: many in Sado estuary coastal lagoons to south on 16th May 1985.

Guillemot *Uria aalge* **MOROCCO** Second record away from Strait of Gibraltar: Cap Rhir on 23rd December 1983.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* **NORWAY** First record in inner Oslofjord: from late February to early April 1985 (plates 305 & 306).

Puffin *Fratercula arctica* **PORTUGAL** Exceptional wreck: many (mainly adults) dead in January-February 1985 (two with rings were from Scottish colonies on St Kilda and Sule Skerry).

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* **MOROCCO** Two reported in dunes of Mehdiya north of Rabat, on 24th September 1983*, confirmation required (none of three previous records entirely satisfactory). **SPAIN** Southerly expansion continuing: breeding range limited to northern humid seaboard in 1960s and 1970s, but during 1981 number of observations inland, and now seems established in several villages and towns in Catalonia, Aragón and Old Castile.

Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* **FINLAND** First to third records: Utajärvi on 2nd October 1980, Jämsä during 14th-23rd December 1984, and Helsinki during January to April 1985 (previously noted as the first record, *Brit. Birds* 78: 343). **SWEDEN** Long-staying individual: Beijershamn, Öland, from 19th February to at least May 1985. (Note, also, wintering in Sweden, December 1976 to April 1977, and in Norway, February-March 1978, *Brit. Birds* 73: 259; 78: 343.)

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* **MOROCCO** First record: several at Marrakech in winter 1982/83 and spring 1983.

Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* **FRANCE** Breeding population: 15 singing in Pyrénées-Orientales in 1984.

305 & 306 Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia*, Norway, March 1985 (John Stenersen)



Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus* MOROCCO First record: pair in desert at Merzouga on 3rd May 1984*.

Plain Swift *Apus unicolor* MOROCCO Fourth record: eight at Agadir on 14th March 1983.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* NETHERLANDS Only record (*Brit. Birds* 73: 576) now rejected.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* POLAND Second record: Tatra Mountains on 12th June 1984.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* SPAIN First record: up to eight in Torremolinos on 4th June 1981 (two apparently repairing old nest of House Martins *Delichon urbica* on a building); thus, observations at nearby Guadalhorce river in January-February 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 274) constitute second record.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* FRANCE Range extension: first breeding record for Loire-Atlantique (Brittany) in 1984.

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos* NETHERLANDS Both records (1972 and 1979) now rejected.

Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* MOROCCO Outside normal range: Taouirt near Taza on 19th March 1983 was far north of usual localities (the only recent European records were in Malta in July, August, September and December 1977 and October 1980, *Brit. Birds* 75: 28).

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* FINLAND Second report: Hyvinkää during 17th-18th March 1985.

Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* NETHERLANDS Only record (1914) now rejected.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* SWITZERLAND Dramatic decrease: in 1984, compared with 1983, 35% fewer colonies and 47% fewer nests in 'representative area in western Switzerland' (cf. 'disastrous population crash' in Luxembourg in 1984, *Brit. Birds* 78: 343).

House Martin *Delichon urbica* MALTA Breeding attempt: pair carrying nest material for several days at Valletta in 1985, but site deserted (four previous confirmed breeding records, first in 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 28, 572).

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* MOROCCO Seventh record: two south of Agadir on 28th December 1984. POLAND Seventh record: one to three at Jastarnia on seven dates during 15th September to 6th October 1984.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* NETHERLANDS Only record (1978) now rejected. POLAND Influx: one to 13 (on 20th) at Jastarnia during 9th-27th September 1984 (only two previous records).

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* NETHERLANDS All nine records (1960-75) now rejected.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* FINLAND Hybrid pair: for third successive year, male paired with female Yellow Wagtail *M. flava* at same site in south.

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* LUXEMBOURG Second record: two on two occasions, 19th and 26th February 1985 (first record was in 1974). MOROCCO First breeding-season record in Middle Atlas: pair on top of Jbel Bou-Iblane (3,190 m) on 9th June 1983 (previously known only from High Atlas).

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* FINLAND Ninth record: Lågskär bird observatory on 29th May 1985.

Red-rumped Wheatear *Oenanthe moesta* MOROCCO Outside normal range: in spring 1984, female near Taza on 25th March 1984, female near Aknoul on 13th April 1984, and two at Segangan near Nador on 8th April 1984.

Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura* NETHERLANDS Only record (1969) now rejected.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* NETHERLANDS Only record (1977) now rejected.

Black-throated/Red-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* FINLAND Tenth record: *T. r. atrogularis* near Porvoo during 25th-29th December 1984 (ninth was in May 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 270). POLAND Second or third record: male *T. r. ruficollis* near Lwówek Śląski on 1st April 1984. SPAIN Deletion: February 1983 record (*Brit. Birds* 78: 344) not accepted.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* MOROCCO Eighth record: two at Daïet Afourgah on 7th January 1984.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* NETHERLANDS Only record (1971) now rejected.

Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis* FRANCE Huge decrease: following severe 1984/85 winter. YUGOSLAVIA Decrease: population in peninsular Istria died in 1984/85 winter, and a few pairs remain only in Mirna Delta.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella*

certhiola NETHERLANDS Only record (1963) now rejected.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* AUSTRIA Second and third records: Rhein delta in May 1985*.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* FRANCE Deletion: record on 20th October 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 271) not accepted.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY Minimum of 20 pairs discovered in southeast Saarland in 1985 (previously known from only two sites). SWEDEN Second record: Segerstad, Öland, on 6th October 1984* (first was in October 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 592). SWITZERLAND Northward expansion continues: first breeding in Vaud in 1983. (Cf. range expansion in Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland, *Brit. Birds* 77: 590.)

Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola* MOROCCO More widespread than supposed: in Middle Atlas at Almis Marmoucha and Oulad Ali in April 1984.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* BELGIUM First and second records: Bruxelles on 23rd April 1984* and near Libramont in April 1985*. FINLAND Eighth record: Långskär bird observatory on 29th May 1985. SWEDEN Twelfth and thirteenth records: male at Hoburgen on 16th May 1984, and female at Nidingen on 31st May 1984.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* BELGIUM Third record: trapped and ringed at Heist during 1st-3rd November 1985 (first and second were in October 1979 and October-November 1982, *Brit. Birds* 76: 276). FINLAND Correction: Aspskär on 7th (not 17th) October 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 344). POLAND Fourth record: Osieczna on 1st December 1984. SWEDEN Sixth to eighth records: Björnsfyr on 28th September 1984, Hoburgen on 3rd October 1984, and Svenska Högarne on 3rd October 1984.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* ESTONIAN SSR Sixth and seventh records: two males singing in W-Saaremaa on 20th May 1985. NETHERLANDS First since 1976: female at Maassvlakte during 10th-12th May 1985*.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* FINLAND Third record: male in Salo during 13th-15th May 1985 (second was in October-November 1984, *Brit. Birds* 78: 344).

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* SWEDEN Third record: Falsterbo on 6th May 1984 (first and second were in May-

June and October 1983, *Brit. Birds* 77: 242; and note expansion in Denmark, *Brit. Birds* 76: 570).

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* FINLAND First confirmed breeding: four fledglings in Turku in July. SPAIN Continued westerly expansion: several nests found in valley of Guadiana River, close to Portuguese border, in 1981 and 1982. (Cf. increases, passage and vagrancy in Belgium, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland and Yugoslavia, *Brit. Birds* 78: 344.)

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* POLAND Second record: male showing characters of *L. i. phoenicuroides* caught on Hel Peninsula on 18th September 1984 (first was in September 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 573).

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* SWITZERLAND Decline: only four broods at last remaining site in 1984, and none fledged (cf. breeding contraction in Austria, *Brit. Birds* 77: 242).

Alpine Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus* NETHERLANDS Only record (1882 or 1883) now rejected.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* SPAIN Expansion in Canary Islands: after first breeding in La Laguna on Tenerife in 1976, new colony of about 20 pairs found in Maspalomas on Gran Canaria in 1984.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* GREECE Extensive influx: in north in July 1984, including one flock of over 500 individuals. POLAND Small influx in May-June 1984: two near Lubiewo during 19th-20th May, 21 near Gardno Lake during 17th-20th May, and one on Hel Peninsula on 2nd June. (Cf. small influxes in Austria, Finland and France in May 1984, *Brit. Birds* 77: 591.)

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* NETHERLANDS Both records (before 1858) now rejected.

Siskin *Carduelis spinus* LUXEMBOURG Probably breeding: present throughout summer 1985 and probably breeding (only confirmed breeding was in 1982), evidently 'overspill' from neighbouring Belgian Ardennes, 'where hundreds of breeding pairs reported this summer'.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* FINLAND Large influx: nearly 400 mist-netted, mainly in north and northeast, during February to April 1985.

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* MOROCCO Northerly range extensions: in

spring 1984, nesting on Mediterranean side up to coastal relief from Beni-Boufrah (west of Al-Hoceima) to Nador, and on Atlantic side in Khatouat Hills just southeast of Casablanca; on 7th April 1985, one heard near Ouezzane, far northwest even of new range extension. (Note British record in May 1984, *Brit. Birds* 78: 581.)

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* NETHERLANDS Both records (1876 and 1967) now rejected.

House Bunting *Emberiza striolata* MOROCCO Northerly range extension and consolidation: since appearance in Casablanca in 1960s, arrived Rabat spring 1982, proved breeding 1983, population increasing and colonising all districts of Rabat-Salé

neighbourhood in spring 1984 and 1985.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* LATVIAN SSR First nesting record: summer 1985 (cf. increasing vagrancy and spring records in Bulgaria and Poland, first breeding in Estonian SSR in 1979, and expansion in Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 75: 573; 76: 276, 570; 77: 242, 591).

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* LATVIAN SSR First record: male in May 1985 (first record in Estonian SSR was in May 1977, *Brit. Birds* 72: 280).

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* FINLAND First record: Vöyri during 5th-8th May 1982 (probably an escape).

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No information was received from Albania, Bulgaria, Denmark, the Faeroe Islands, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Iceland or Romania.

Product reports

Barbour 'Durham' jacket

I am old enough to remember the days when senior birdwatchers went about in old raincoats and battered trilbys, and to have lived through the era of the excellent (but now rare) duffle coat into the present period when the range of fieldwear available to us is so vast that making a sensible choice is very difficult. At the end of the day, I suppose what we wear is very much a matter of personal preference and what we can afford.

Many of us practise a curious form of inverted snobbery which manifests itself in a positive tendency (a) to look as scruffy as possible, (b) to ignore the realities of the weather, and (c) never to be seen dead in the sort of efficient weatherproof gear worn by, for example, fishermen and field sportsmen. This may explain the relative rarity of the classic *Barbour* jacket among birders (although I am sure expense is also a crucial factor), even though it will look marvellously scruffy when old, and despite the fact that anyone who has one will tell you it is probably without equal as an all-round, all-weather jacket.

The 'Durham' differs from the original *Barbour* in having a fixed hood and being totally unlined. It is, basically, a superior form of lightweight waterproof jacket which can be rolled up into a fairly small, compact sausage and easily stowed away or carried. I have used mine for 18 months, in all weathers, including blizzards, horizontal sleet and hail, and torrential rain, and, try as I might, I cannot find fault with it. It is light, comfortable, thoroughly waterproof (the shoulders, incidentally, are double-layered) and even reasonably windproof—although in winter it is best worn over another, warmer jacket or a few layers of sweaters. It has two reasonably large side-pockets with double flaps which fasten with big press-studs and are reliably waterproof. The cuffs too can be fastened with press-studs, as can the front opening, although the latter is principally closed by a robust metal zip. This zip runs right up to the chin, where it meets the drawstrings which pull the hood in about your face: this arrangement is surprisingly comfortable, as is the hood itself, despite its being unlined. Another plus feature for the hood is that, unlike most others, it is actually head-shaped.

What puts many people off *Barbour* jackets is the fearful smell of the patent oily wax with which they are treated. It pervades the inside of the jacket as well and owners of new 'Durhams' are well advised to wear old jackets or soon-to-be-discarded sweaters underneath; fortunately the odour soon disappears. My 'Durham' is probably overdue for re-waxing, a job I view with some misgivings, although those who have done it tell me that it is really very easy.

Apart from the minor nuisance of re-waxing, the only other drawback of the *Barbour* 'Durham' is its price, currently £50.00. That apart, I can thoroughly recommend it. It even looks slightly scruffy when new, and in this respect definitely improves with age!

MIKE EVERETT



Savannah Sparrow: new to the Western Palearctic

S. J. Broyd

At 06.08 GMT on 11th April 1982, at Portland Bill, Dorset, Gary Edwards saw a small bird land about 15m away. Although he and three other observers watched it for about one minute down to 2½m or so before it disappeared beneath a rock, none was able to identify the species. About 12 minutes later, a group of observers which included Keith L. Fox and Ron King noticed a small, streaky passerine on some nearby rocks. Their views were brief, as the bird quickly disappeared. Some suggested that it was a Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*, and others that it was a strange-looking Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*, but the presence of yellow about the supercilium prevented specific identification. A search of the immediate area revealed only a female Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*, and the mystery bird was soon forgotten.

Later that afternoon, I was searching for migrants along the east cliffs of the Portland Bird Observatory recording area when I noticed a small, streaky bird feeding in the short grass at the cliff-edge. It was half obscured, so I approached closer; as I did, it turned towards me, revealing its small triangular bill and very noticeable yellow supercilium. Its boldly streaked underparts and pink legs helped me to identify it as a Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, a species I had seen commonly in North America. I quickly attracted the attention of my wife and J. Tilbrook, who were close by. As soon as it was clear that the sparrow was settled in the one area, I hurriedly returned to the observatory to alert others. A small crowd quickly gathered, including RK, who felt fairly sure that the sparrow was the bird he had seen earlier that morning at the Bill.

During the course of the afternoon, I took the following field notes:

SIZE AND STRUCTURE Smaller than accompanying Rock Pipits *Anthus spinoletta*, seeming closer to Little Bunting in size. The notched tail looked shorter than that of Little Bunting, and the legs slightly longer. The tail was shorter than the total wing length. Five primary tips were visible on the closed wing.

the tip of the longest extending only just beyond the tip of the longest tertial. The head and its triangular bill were small.

PLUMAGE *Head* Supercilium yellow, extending from base of bill to well beyond the

eye, narrowing and suffusing to creamy white towards the nape. Lateral crown-stripes brown with finer dark brown streaks, contrasting with a fine pale straw-coloured median crown-stripe, which also showed a few fine darker fleckings. Median crown-stripe most noticeable when viewed head-on. Nape greyish-straw with very fine greyish-brown flecking. Lores and ear-coverts greyish-straw, bordered by thin dark brown lines above and below, which did not meet at

rear edge. The upper border formed an eye-stripe, which became more prominent behind the eye, and the lower formed a moustachial stripe beginning at the base of the bill and ending at the nape. Submoustachial stripe white, contrasting with a dark brown malar stripe, which was thin at the base of the bill but widened to form a triangular area at side of throat. Throat and chin white. *Underparts* White, with bold brownish-black streaking radiating out from



307. Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Dorset, April 1982 (John Marchant)

308. Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Dorset, April 1982 (John Marchant)



309. Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Dorset, April 1982 (R. H. Hogg)



malar stripes to form distinct gorget across breast. Two broad streaks stretched the length of the flanks and were noticeably more brown. Belly, vent and undertail-coverts unmarked. *Wings* Median coverts brown with buffy fringes and off-white tips. Greater coverts similar. Both sets of tips formed pencil-thin wingbars, detectable only at close range. Primaries and secondaries brownish. Tertials dark brown with pale buff fringes. *Upperparts* Mantle and scapulars brownish-

grey, with two very noticeable off-white 'braces' running parallel towards the rump. Both braces edged brown, adding to their prominence. Rump greyish-brown with darker brown streaks. Tail brown, light at base, darker towards tip.

BARE PARTS Eye dark and beady, with thin yellow eye-ring. Bill dark horn on upper mandible with pink lower edge; entirely pink on lower mandible. Legs pink, but looked orange in some lights.

The sparrow remained in the area until 16th April, during which time it was watched by several hundred observers. On 12th April, it was trapped and ringed by M. Rogers, who took the following description in the hand:

PLUMAGE Crown grey-brown with sepia feather centres, ill-defined off-white central crown-stripe. Supercilium lemon-yellow, the yellow coloration extending from above nostrils to 3mm behind eye, thereafter becoming off-white, broadening and extending almost to nape. Lores and ear-coverts light brown with a dark chestnut spot at rear. Moustachial stripe dark brown, extending to border the ear-coverts. Submoustachial stripe white. Nape and upper back medium-brown with darker feather centres, one row of white feathers producing a short white stripe

on each side of back, the feathers to the outside of this stripe having much darker centres than rest of back. Rump light brown with dark feather centres, uppertail-coverts lighter than rump. Tail as rump, central feathers fairly worn, outer tail feather light fawn. Primaries, secondaries and tertials light ginger-brown, tertials being very dark-centred. Lesser coverts brown, tinged olive-green; median coverts brown, tipped fawn, forming a light wingbar; greater coverts ginger-brown with darker centres. Primary coverts as primaries. Chin white,

310. Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Dorset, April 1982 (S. G. D. Cook)



[The inclusion of plate 310 has been subsidised by a generous donation from the estate of the late Miss Violet Maxse. Ebs]

bordered with dense gorget of brown streaks extending to upper belly and along flanks. Belly white. Undertail-coverts white with light brown centres, underwing silver-brown, axillaries very pale brown.

BARE PARTS Upper mandible steel-grey with pink cutting edge, lower mandible pink. Iris dark brown, pupil black, orbital ring pale yellow. Legs and feet pink (flesh).

WING FORMULA 3rd, 4th and 5th primaries equal, 2nd -2mm, 6th -2mm, 7th -8mm,

8th -10mm, 9th -13mm; 1st 6mm shorter than primary coverts. 3rd to 6th primaries emarginated on outer web.

MEASUREMENTS Wing 80mm, Tail 61mm, depth of tail notch 13mm. Bill (to skull) 14mm. Tarsus 24mm. Hindclaw 8mm. Weight 26.7g at 15.00 GMT on 12th April; when retrapped at 16.00 hours on 16th April, its weight had increased by 4.3g, to 31.0g, proving its ability to adapt to its diet of small flies.

Throughout its stay, the sparrow remained very confiding, which enabled close study. It ran about actively in search of food, in a similar manner to that of the resident Rock Pipits, and even established a small territory, which it defended with short bursts of song delivered from the top of large limestone blocks, under which it roosted at night. P. J. Grant noted this song as a two-second, buzzy 'tit-tit-titti seee seee', with the penultimate syllable up-slurred and the final one down-slurred.

Racial diagnosis

The Savannah Sparrow has many subspecies. Colour-forms range from dark brown to light grey. The race known as the 'Ipswich Sparrow' *A. s. princeps* (formerly considered a separate species) is the largest, and the Portland bird's measurements fall within those of this race. Confirmation of this is provided by the following extract and table from a letter to MR from Professor J. D. Rising of the University of Ontario:

'I compared the measurements of your bird with those from four different localities from eastern Canada. I have similar measurements from several different localities from throughout North America, but, in general, I know that there is little size variation east of the Rocky Mountains except that the Sable Island birds are large. So these localities are characteristic.

311. Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Dorset, April 1982 ((A. J. Croucher)





312. Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Dorset, April 1982 (David M. Gottridge)

314. Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Dorset, April 1982 (D. Hughes)

313. Below left, Savannah Sparrow
Ammodramus sandwichensis, Dorset, April 1982
(S. G. D. Cook)





315. Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Dorset, April 1982 (R. H. Hogg)

The measurements are from study skins, and the specimens were prepared in a way that makes it impossible to take a bill to skull measurement comparable with yours. I selected Sable Island for the reasons stated above, and Halifax (even though the samples from there are not large) as the nearest mainland population. 'River John' is a large sample from northern Nova Scotia, on the coast of Northumberland Strait, which separates Prince Edward Island from Nova Scotia. River John is about 20 miles [32 km] west of Pictou or New Glasgow. Wallaceburg is in what is called S.W. Ontario. Your measurement of 80 mm for the wing length is larger than that of any Savannah Sparrow from these localities, except for males from Sable Island (their average is 77.8 mm and wings of 80 mm are not unusual). Note that my specimens were measured somewhat later in the season and would be slightly more worn. Tail length of 61 mm is, again, out of range for all but males from Sable Island, but not unusual for that population. Tarsus length of 24 mm is larger than any I have. Clearly, I think, we have measured these differently (or perhaps I get post-mortem shrinkage); nevertheless, long tarsus (and this clearly is a long tarsus) is consistent with Sable Island. Hind claw of 8 mm is within the range of River John and Wallaceburg, but close to the average for males from Sable Island.

'There is generally a lot of variation in weights, though little variation in the way they are taken. The weights that you give are quite high for a Savannah Sparrow (see table) and I think clearly preclude the possibility that your bird is anything other than an Ipswich Sparrow. I think that there is no doubt but that your bird is from the Sable Island population. Furthermore it could be argued strongly that it is in all probability a male from that population.'

In the field, the race *princeps* may sometimes be difficult to distinguish, but it is generally larger and greyer than other subspecies of Savannah Sparrow. Its legs are long and, according to Robbins *et al.* (1966), it prefers to walk rather than hop. The Portland bird certainly had long legs and was often seen striding through the grass.

Table 1. Measurements and weights of Savannah Sparrows *Ammodramus sandwichensis* (supplied by Professor J. D. Rising *in litt.*) compared with Portland individual

Locality	Sex	No.	Mean	Range	Date of collection	Portland bird
WING LENGTH						
Sable Is	♂	23	77.8	73.3-83.4	late May	80 mm
	♀	15	73.1	68.7-76.9	late May	
Halifax	♂	12	69.6	65.8-71.7	late May	
	♀	15	65.8	62.4-68.9	late May	
River John	♂	30	70.2	66.6-74.8	late June	
	♀	21	66.2	62.9-69.7	late June	
Wallaceburg, Ont.	♂	40	68.5	64.7-72.7	late May/early June	
	♀	15	64.0	61.6-66.4	late May/early June	
TAIL LENGTH						
Sable Is	♂	23	59.3	56.1-63.0		61 mm
	♀	13	56.0	51.0-58.6		
Halifax	♂	12	53.2	49.1-58.6		
	♀	14	49.8	47.2-52.8		
River John	♂	28	53.4	50.0-56.5		
	♀	18	50.0	46.2-52.0		
Wallaceburg	♂	37	52.4	48.6-56.1		
	♀	9	49.3	47.9-50.6		
TARSUS						
Sable Is	♂	21	22.6	21.7-23.5		24 mm
	♀	12	21.9	21.4-22.9		
Halifax	♂	10	21.2	20.6-21.8		
	♀	13	20.3	19.7-21.4		
River John	♂	23	20.6	18.7-22.0		
	♀	18	20.2	18.2-21.5		
Wallaceburg	♂	37	20.1	18.3-22.3		
	♀	12	20.0	19.2-20.5		
HIND CLAW						
Sable Is	♂	21	7.8	6.9-8.8		8 mm
	♀	15	7.4	6.8-8.4		
Halifax	♂	11	7.0	6.4-7.6		
	♀	15	7.0	6.2-7.8		
River John	♂	27	6.9	6.2-8.0		
	♀	20	7.3	6.4-8.2		
Wallaceburg	♂	38	7.4	6.2-8.6		
	♀	14	7.0	5.7-8.0		
WEIGHT						
Sable Is	♂	25	27.9	21.0-32.5	late May	26.7-31.0 g
	♀	16	26.1	22.4-31.5	late May	
Halifax	♂	12	21.0	18.5-23.2	late May	
	♀	15	19.1	17.5-20.6	late May	
River John	♂	31	20.0	17.4-22.5	late June	
	♀	22	18.9	16.0-22.5	late June	
Wallaceburg	♂	41	19.8	16.9-23.6	late May/early June	
	♀	14	18.9	16.5-22.2	late May/early June	

Further confirmation that the Portland individual belonged to the race *princeps* was provided by Professor Ian A. McLaren of Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia (*in litt.* to BOU Rarities Committee), who is probably more familiar than anybody with *princeps* and who included the following useful characters for distinguishing this race:

'A feature of even the darker and more brownish Ipswich Sparrows in spring is the presence of at least some remnants of the pale to light grey margins of nape, mantle and back feathers. Eastern Savannah Sparrows sometimes have such greyish or even whitish margins on the lateral nape, but never, in my experience, on back or coverts . . . The greyish margins of the nape, back (and lesser coverts?) are noted in the excellent descriptions by Keith Fox. Interestingly, the description of the bird in the hand from the Portland Bird Observatory does not mention these grey margins. It is easy to be distracted by the brown feather centres of the back and by the brown wings. However, the grey margins of the central back feathers, scapulars, and nape are very clear on John Marchant's slides, and in my view are diagnostic.

' . . . I believe that the slides by John Marchant are diagnostic in showing the narrow, tawny streaking [on the breast] of a typical spring Ipswich Sparrow, quite unlike that of any Savannah Sparrow that I have seen.'

There is also some circumstantial evidence worth noting. The Portland bird's choice of habitat, close to the sea, is in keeping with *princeps*. In North America, it can be found feeding along the tideline with Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis* and Lapland Buntings *Calcarius lapponicus*. The Portland sparrow rarely strayed from the short grass at the cliff-edge and often searched for food on small ledges on the cliff-face.

According to Professor Rising (*in litt.*), the race *princeps* migrates up the eastern seaboard of North America during the first two weeks of April, two weeks earlier than other races of Savannah Sparrow. This timing fits well with the Portland bird's arrival. Additionally, *princeps* regularly heads eastwards out over the Atlantic to reach its breeding grounds on Sable Island off Nova Scotia, which could increase its odds of occurring in the Western Palearctic at this time of year.

316. Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Dorset, April 1982 (*R. H. Hogg*)





317. Savannah sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Dorset, April 1982 (S. G. D. Cook)

The race *princeps* is nevertheless a very scarce bird, with a springtime population of approximately 2,000-3,000 (Stobo & McLaren 1975). Its occurrence in Britain is, therefore, quite remarkable.

318. Savannah sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Texas, April 1982 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)



Notes on the species

The Savannah Sparrow is a very common species of agricultural country and grassland throughout North America. It is resident in the south, but northerly populations migrate south as far as Costa Rica. It is a regular migrant along the eastern seaboard during both spring and autumn, and has long been considered likely to occur as a transatlantic vagrant (see Robbins 1980). It builds a small nest of grass and moss on the ground, normally in a hollow sheltered by grass, or in a small bush or tree. It lays four to six eggs, which are spotted with brown and purple. The incubation period is about 12 days.

Acknowledgments

I should like to thank M. Rogers for providing in-the-hand data and for corresponding with Professor J. Rising on the racial identification of Savannah Sparrow; Professor Rising for his comments; and P. J. Grant for advising on an earlier draft of this paper. *British Birds* is most grateful to the 11 photographers who supplied photographs of this bird, some of which are included here and all of which were invaluable for reference and assessment purposes.

Summary

A Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis* showing the characters of the race *princeps*, colloquially known as 'Ipswich Sparrow', was present at Portland Bill, Dorset, from 11th to 16th April 1982. It was trapped on 12th and 16th April. Details are given of its identification and racial determination. This has been accepted as the first record of this Nearctic passerine for the Western Palearctic.

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S. J. Broyd, 27 Kirkley Road, London SW19

Seventy-five years ago...

'YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER IN LINCOLNSHIRE. On October 3rd, 1910, I shot a Yellow-browed Warbler (*Phylloscopus superciliosus*) in the bottom of a thick hedge near the sea-bank at North Cotes, Lincolnshire. The bird was a male and very fat. There was no migration in progress at the time as a heavy westerly gale was blowing, but there was a light east wind on the night of the 1st. This is the fourth Lincolnshire example of this little warbler. I obtained it for the first time on October 7th, 1892, and from that time I saw no more of the species for sixteen years, when I found one dead on the coast on October 19th, 1908, and shot a third on October 12th of the following year, all four examples having been killed within a mile of the same spot.' (*Brit. Birds* 4: 209, December 1910)

Mystery photographs



319. First-summer or adult summer Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*, near end of moult to winter plumage, Peru, August 1979 (Ed Mackrill)

108 From its general proportions, last month's mystery wader (plate 289, repeated here as plate 319) is clearly one of the small sandpipers *Calidris*. It looks like a stint, but, as there is nothing to give an accurate clue to size, it would be wise consciously to eliminate the other larger possibilities on some more tangible features. It is not too difficult. White-rumped *C. fuscicollis* and Baird's Sandpipers *C. bairdii*, Dunlin *C. alpina* and Sanderling *C. alba* can all be ruled out, the first two at least by the fact that the primary tips do not extend beyond the tail, and the last two at least by the bill shape, which is proportionately too short and fine-tipped. In any case, the pale legs are obvious, further eliminating those four and leading straight to the three species of pale-legged stint: Temminck's Stint *C. temminckii*, Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta* or Least Sandpiper *C. minutilla*.

The feather patterns, especially the streaked breast, scaly upperparts and rather well-marked supercilium, safely put Temminck's out of consideration: in all plumages, that species is much plainer in these areas.

So we are left with that potentially tricky pair, Long-toed Stint and Least Sandpiper. Reference to the recent stint identification paper (*Brit. Birds* 77: 293-315) would be the obvious next step. There, these two are treated together as 'Group Two' on page 305, and the introduction to that group confirms that we are on the right track: our mystery bird shows the right combination of pale legs, fine-tipped bill, short projection of a single primary tip beyond the longest tertial, and rather long toes.

As always with any difficult pair of stints, careful appraisal of the full range of available features is recommended before reaching a decision. Taking the consistently most useful distinguishing features (those which are italicised in the paper's detailed descriptions), the description of Least's general proportions (short-necked, short-legged and hunched) fits our bird, as does its same-length middle toe, tarsus and bill (all fortunately well shown in the photograph). The hind toe (clearly visible on the right foot),



320-323. Mystery photographs 109. Identify the species. Answer next month

too, looks 'normal length for a stint', fitting Least, as does the all-black bill (not showing any pale-based lower mandible as on Long-toed).

Before we start on the plumage features, what age is the bird? The best clue is in those two black-centred, old, worn-to-a-point, summer lower scapulars; they are mixed in with fresh, dusky-centred and pale-fringed



winter plumage feathers, and the bird is in active moult (the two inner tertials are missing, and the uneven arrangement of the scapulars and innerwing-coverts suggests that some of those have also been dropped). So this individual must be a first-summer or adult summer near the end of its moult to winter head and body plumage, a plumage state likely to be encountered from the end of July to the beginning of October. The scapulars and innerwing-coverts have diffuse dark centres and pale fringes, which is the correct winter pattern for a Least (Long-toed has distinctive blackish feather-centres, with broad, clear-cut pale fringes), and the head pattern fits Least perfectly: dull (not whitish) supercilia which join finely across forehead, well-marked dark line across lores, dark patch on rear ear-coverts, separated from eye by an obvious but faint paler area, and faint split-supercilium effect.

The answer to last month's puzzle is therefore clear: a classic winter Least on all the visible features of bill colour, structure and plumage. Ed Mackrill, who photographed it in Peru in August 1979, did amazingly well to catch the bird in such a helpful and instructive pose. P. J. GRANT

Notes



Racial identification of Cattle Egret On 29th June 1980, I went to see a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* which I was informed had been discovered in a field not far away from Slimbridge, Gloucestershire. Its jizz struck me

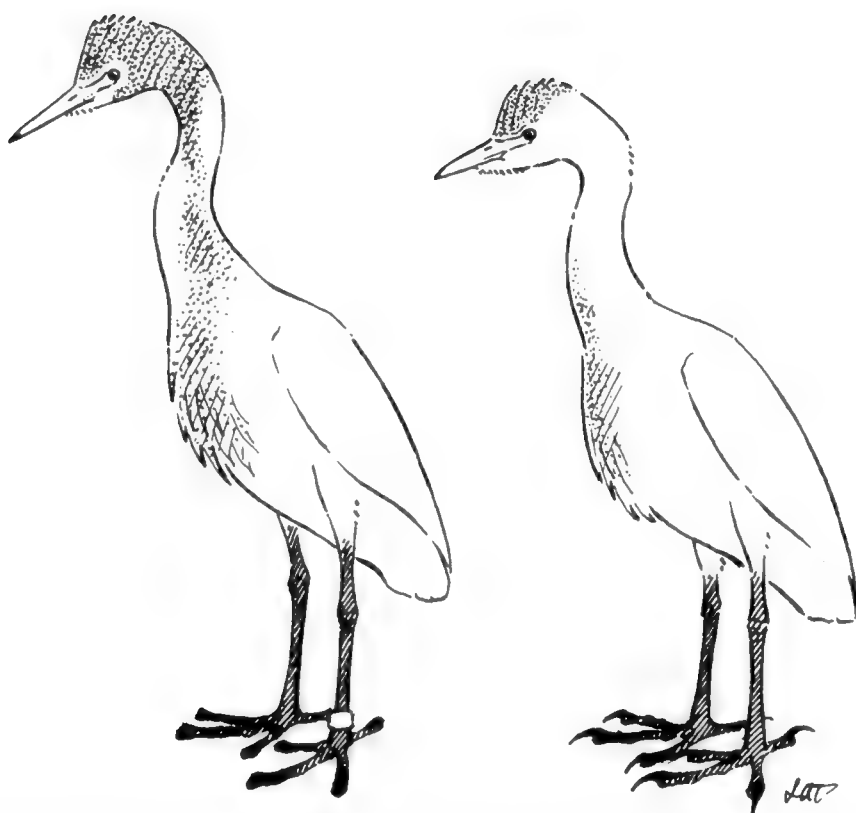


Fig. 1. Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*: left, *coromandus* in Gloucestershire in June 1980; right, nominate race (Laurel A. Tucker)

immediately as being odd, as it had other observers. Compared with Cattle Egrets I had seen in winter in the Camargue, its bill was proportionately long and fine, its neck long and slim, and its legs rather long. Those in the Camargue had a very distinctive and characteristic appearance which this bird could not quite achieve; in fact, it seemed structurally intermediate between Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and the nominate race of Cattle Egret. It was in summer plumage and had more extensive and richer buff than nominate Cattle Egret. With the exception of white in a narrow bar above the bill, around the eye and on the chin, the whole head and part of the neck was a bright orangey-buff. The elongated plumes on the lower mantle were a dark golden-brown. The eye was bright yellow; and the bill was pinkish-flesh, blackish towards the tip. These differences (see fig. 1) indicated that the egret was of the Asiatic race *B. ibis coromandus* and, therefore, almost certainly an escape. Later, much closer views revealed that not only was it ringed, but it had all or most of its claws missing. According to the *Gloucestershire Bird Report* for 1980, the bird was present from 26th June to 3rd September, and again briefly in mid November.

Hancock (1984) stated that, in winter plumage, the Asiatic race of Cattle Egret is indistinguishable in the field from the nominate race. *BWP* also states of *coromandus* in winter plumage 'racial identification hardly possible'. Fig. 1 illustrates not only the extent of buff on the Slimbridge Cattle Egret, but the distinctive difference in shape and structure between it and nominate *ibis*. Photographs also seem to bear out structural differences between the two races. It may be advisable, therefore, not to take any

winter-plumaged Cattle Egret at face value, but to check its jizz and structure in order to try to determine its race (and thus origin).

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REFERENCE

HANCOCK, J. 1984. Field identification of West Palearctic white herons and egrets. *Brit. Birds* 77: 451-457.

T. P. Inskipp has commented as follows: 'Judging from photographs, the two subspecies could be separated in the field in non-breeding plumage—with previous experience, and assuming that the bird does not spend all its time in a hunched posture when the thinner neck of *coromandus* would be difficult to determine. *BWP* also mentions that *coromandus* has more of the tibia bare. This is illustrated in the sketch, but is not mentioned in the text'. Eds

Yellow orbital ring of Semipalmated Plover A minor but seemingly valid distinction between Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* and Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula* in adult summer plumage is the thin, bright lemon-yellow orbital ring of Semipalmated Plover. I have consistently noted this feature in spring when viewing Semipalmated Plovers in good light at ranges of up to 30 m with binoculars, and find it reminiscent of Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius* (although not so prominent). The rather more dainty, slimmer build and apparently thinner legs of Semipalmated Plover, relative to Ringed Plover, serve to enhance this comparison with Little Ringed Plover, as noted by Paul Dukes (*Brit. Birds* 73: 458). The orbital ring of Ringed Plover is more obscure, and dark orange in colour, thereby decreasing its prominence.

A direct photographic comparison of these features can be seen in the *Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding* (1983, vol. 1, page 325) and is even more vividly portrayed in the photographs of the two species in R. H. Armstrong's *A Guide to the Birds of Alaska* (1980, pages 107-108). The yellow orbital ring is still apparent at least into August, but is not present in winter plumage. The distinctive calls remain, however, the easiest way of distinguishing these two similar species at any season.

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Plastic hazards to birds Over the last six years, on Walney Island, Cumbria, I have seen at least half-a-dozen instances of birds trapped by the plastic used to bind beer cans together in fours or sixes. My first encounter involved an Eider *Somateria mollissima* with its bill thrust through the central aperture and looking as if it was sporting a pair of plastic spectacles; the constriction was such that it was obviously unable to feed. Additionally, I found a tideline corpse of an Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* with its left leg through one hole and its head through the diagonally opposite hole; its death was probably due to its inability to feed. The latest example involved a Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* ostensibly displaying a head-dress of a



324. Dead Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* with plastic six-can holder attached to head and bill. Cumbria, March 1984 (Tim Dean)

six-can holder, part of which was firmly entwined around the head and the other part providing a quite unwelcome bit between its mandibles (plate 324). In all these examples, death was probably due to the constricting effect of the plastic. Other examples have involved birds trailing these infernal pieces of detritus around their legs.

TIM DEAN

Coastguard Cottages, South Walney Nature Reserve, Walney Island, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria

Little Terns harassing tired Cuckoo, which landed on sea On 4th August 1983, at Minsmere, Suffolk, I saw a juvenile Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* flying low over the sea away from the shore and being mobbed by four or five Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* from their breeding colony on the shore. Perhaps because of their persistence, it eventually dropped onto the sea, which was very calm. The terns dispersed, and after about one minute the Cuckoo took off easily and flew strongly over the water for about 30-40m, before dropping onto the sea again. This sequence was repeated about ten times, not always because of the attentions of the Little Terns. The farthest point it reached from land was about 150m, and each flight covered between 30m and 50m; periods on the water varied between one and two minutes, during which it floated with head up and wings open on the surface. Eventually, the Cuckoo managed to reach the shore close to the tern colony, where it was mobbed fiercely. I picked up the Cuckoo, carried it from the colony, and released it into the RSPB reserve, where it flew off strongly.

RODNEY INGRAM

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Otter predation on Black Guillemots During visits to many of Shetland's offshore islands in summer 1982, it became clear that otters *Lutra lutra* were an important predator on Black Guillemots *Cepphus grylle*. Many accounts of the otter's diet include birds, although in small numbers compared with the fish component (Erlinge 1967; Jenkins & Harper 1980); the species taken are usually those commonly associated with freshwater study areas.

In Shetland, otters are the only mammalian ground predator on most smaller islands, and frequent similar boulder areas to many breeding Black Guillemots (one occupied nest was within 15cm of an old otter corpse trapped under the boulders). Of 18 nest failures at which otter predation (see evidence below) or scavenging had occurred, seven resulted from direct predation of incubating adults, eight from predation on nestlings, while at three remains only of adults were found. In one study area, six adults and two nestlings had been taken from a total of eight different nests, representing a 10.5% failure rate of occupied nests. Although all the nestlings showed signs of having been eaten by otters, the possibility that they had initially been killed by large gulls *Larus* or Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua* cannot be ruled out. A complete Black Guillemot foot was found in one otter spraint, and remains of Puffins *Fratercula arctica* and Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* were also recorded at several places frequented by otters.

Adult Black Guillemots taken on the nest had usually been decapitated, and in a series of adjacent nests in one colony the uneaten bodies were found still on the eggs. Nestling remains were normally found less than 2m from the nest entrance, decapitated, neatly skinned, and with the sternum crushed. In all cases, relatively few feathers had been ingested and many skins and carcasses smelled strongly of otter, some having been urinated upon. Weldon (1881) described an otter catching a Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* on the water and then decapitating it once ashore, and Stephens (1957) found that two pigeons *Columba* presented to captive otters were decapitated, with feathers strewn about, but none of the flesh eaten. These accounts of otters handling avian prey are similar to findings in Shetland, but the reasons for leaving a carcass uneaten are unclear, although food-storing may be involved.

Olsson (1974) in Sweden and Folkestad (1982) in Norway found that many Black Guillemots and other seabirds were killed by minks *Mustela vison*, particularly in boulder areas where minks make their lairs. Although otters are probably less numerous than minks, their predation could influence nesting dispersion or regulate the size or formation of accessible seabird colonies in such areas as Shetland.

This work on Black Guillemots was funded by the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group.

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Collared Doves nesting inside buildings During the summer of 1983, a pair of Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* started to build a nest about 7 m up on the roof girder inside an open-sided farm building in Cambridgeshire. Before completion, a pair of feral Rock Doves *Columba livia* ousted the Collared Doves and used the nest themselves, successfully rearing two young. The Collared Doves then built inside a nearby barn, gaining entrance through a door which was left open. This nest was about 8 m inside from the door, again 7 m from the floor, and situated where the strip lighting (not much used during the summer months) and a small, 5-cm wide girder met; this junction provided a secure base for the nest, which was constructed of straw collected from a nearby dairy unit. A single young was fledged. Most literature mentions Collared Doves as nesting rarely on buildings, but in this instance they nested well inside a building.

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BWP states that Collared Doves in India occasionally nest on rafters in cattle sheds or outhouses; and in Iraq under garage roofs, but not frequently. Derek Goodwin has commented that this is the 'sort of place one would expect them to nest', and has also drawn attention to a letter by L. P. Alder (*Brit. Birds* 56: 114) in which Mr Alder stated that, during 1942-44, when stationed at Jodhpur, India, he frequently found nests of the Collared Dove in the engines of numerous aircraft parked among the scattered acacias in the desert; the doves reared many broods in the aircraft, which were often undisturbed for many months, but also nested in the acacia trees. EDS

Barn Owl attacking and killing adult Woodpigeon Some years ago, near Welburn, North Yorkshire, I was walking towards the edge of a field with some small trees and bushes when a Barn Owl *Tyto alba* suddenly appeared, talons outstretched, then disappeared into a small tree. A Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* then fell to the ground with the owl on top. I watched in amazement as the owl started to pluck the now dead pigeon; it continued plucking for two or three minutes before it flew off, either having seen me (there was no immediate place to hide) or because something else had disturbed it. I went to see the pigeon, which was still very warm when I touched it. It was an adult, and there was a clear patch just to the left of its breastbone where the owl had started to pluck it. I hid close by and waited for over an hour to see if the owl would return, but unfortunately it did not. I left the Woodpigeon as it was, but the following morning it had gone.

ANTHONY NUTTALL
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Threatening behaviour by Barn Owl In view of the statement in Bunn *et al.* (1982) that there are few, if any, genuine records of Barn Owls *Tyto alba* attacking man, the following seems worth recording. On 14th September 1983, I called at a farm in mid Devon. Across a couple of fields was an isolated and rather derelict barn where I found plenty of evidence of recent occupation by Barn Owls (pellets, droppings, moulted feathers). At the farm, I was told that the owls had bred there and that the farmer's wife had had an unusual experience with them. On or very near 25th August that year, she was walking along the track which passes the barn when she heard noises from within; she looked inside a lean-to shed attached to the barn and two Barn Owls flew out. One flew to the corrugated roof, where it flopped up and down making a banging noise, and the other swooped around nearby. To avoid disturbing any young which might have been there, she did not enter the barn. A third owl, presumably a fledgling, was heard calling from a tree about 100m away across the field. The owl which had been on the roof flew up to the ridge and perched there, while the other flew out over the field, turned and came straight at her with legs dropped and talons extended, passing just over her head; as she moved away, it repeated this and in all carried out about 12 'runs' in this threatening manner. She described the experience as both exciting and frightening, and something which she will never forget. It seems certain that the owls had at least one young, newly fledged, nearby and possibly others still in the nest in the barn; the owl's behaviour was probably in response to human intrusion at a moment when the adults were under considerable tension, trying to look after separated young.

GRAHAM MADGE

Firway End, George Hill, Crediton, Devon

REFERENCE

BUNN, D. S., WARBURTON, A. B., & WILSON, R. D. S. 1982. *The Barn Owl*. Calton.

Derek Goodwin has expressed the view that: 'This was probably an ex-tame bird or one that had been "rescued" and released.' Eds

Kingfisher capturing dragonfly on perch At 06.45 GMT on 6th August 1982, in the Cambridge University Botanic Garden, I was watching a Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* perched on a park bench close to a lake. A large dragonfly, probably a male brown hawker *Aeshna grandis*, landed on the opposite end of the bench. About a minute later, the Kingfisher began to shuffle clumsily along the back of the bench towards the dragonfly; when about 1m from the insect, it suddenly darted forward and seized the dragonfly with its bill while in mid flight. On returning to its perch, it began to beat the dragonfly, which was about twice as long as its bill, against the bench. Unfortunately, the Kingfisher was disturbed by a member of the public and it flew off with its prey; I do not know whether or not it ate the dragonfly. Although recently emerged dragonflies are known to be vulnerable to predation from a variety of bird species (Corbet *et al.*, 1960, *Dragonflies*), and Kingfishers are known to take dragonfly larvae underwater (*BWP*), I am not aware of any records of Kingfishers capturing

adult dragonflies in this way. Such behaviour may, however, be frequent during the early hours of the morning, when the low air temperature makes dragonflies more sluggish than later in the day.

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Bathing behaviour of Kingfishers One would probably expect Kingfishers *Alcedo atthis* to bathe exclusively by plunge-diving. At 04.20 GMT on 8th August 1982, in the Cambridge University Botanic Garden, however, I observed a Kingfisher bathing in about 2cm of water in a fountain. Its bathing behaviour resembled that of a small passerine such as a House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, water being sprayed over its body with its wings. After about five minutes, the Kingfisher flew up in to a nearby pine *Pinus* to preen, before returning to bathe again. There was no lack of water deep enough for diving, since there is a large lake within 100m of the fountain. A convalescent Kingfisher which I cared for in 1983 also frequently bathed in shallow water in the same way, even when it was capturing all its food by diving into a large tank.

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Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented as follows: 'This is what I call "stand-in" bathing; it is described in *A Dictionary of Birds* (1985) under "Comfort behaviour".' Eds

Great Spotted Woodpeckers fighting in flight On the afternoon of 9th April 1981, in Belfairs Nature Reserve, Essex, I heard a Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* calling. I stopped on the path and eventually became aware of three woodpeckers in the immediate vicinity. Two of these began to chase each other in an agitated manner, but after a short while they landed on trees nearby. They then flew at each other and began fighting in mid-air, about 1.5m up and vertical and parallel to each other; they clawed at each other and flapped their wings vigorously, but rapidly crashed to the ground, where they immediately separated and flew off in different directions. Both were males, and the third woodpecker was presumably a female. Although I have observed Great Spotted Woodpeckers on numerous occasions, I have never before seen them fight in this manner.

DAVID W. G. LADBROOK

93 Olive Avenue, Leigh on Sea, Essex SS9 3PX

Birds found dead at sewage-farm sludge beds During several years' birdwatching at Ashford Sewage-farm, Kent, I have found a number of bird and mammal species dead in sludge pits or drying beds. Mammals found dead (or still alive) include rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, common rats *Rattus norvegicus* and voles of the genus *Clethrionomys*, many having run in through clumsiness. The most common bird species found dead is the Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, mostly young individuals, but over the years the following 'unexpected' species have also been discovered: Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*, Little Owl

Athene noctua, Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, House Martin *Delichon urbica*, Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Song Thrush *T. philomelos*, Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, and Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*. These include some unlikely species to be found in a sludge bed. It is possible that they flew over, mistook the beds for water and stopped off to feed or drink, or were after the abundant insects in the area.

TREVOR PERKINS

141 Canterbury Road, Kennington, Ashford, Kent

Swallows mobbing Pectoral Sandpiper The *Cheshire Bird Report* for 1974 included a note entitled 'Swallow [*Hirundo rustica*] chasing Pectoral Sandpiper [*Calidris melanotos*]'. On 8th September 1982, at Termoncarragh Lake, Co. Mayo, I saw two Swallows mob a juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper three times within less than five minutes, each time for a short period until the sandpiper was forced to fly from the Swallows' feeding area. I have not noticed other waders suffering similar aggression.

ANDREW H. J. HARROP

16 Yeo Close, Efford, Plymouth PL36ER

Juvenile Blackbird 'frolicking', 'playing' with leaf, and copulating with inanimate objects With reference to earlier notes on Blackbirds *Turdus merula* 'playing' and so on (*Brit. Birds* 73: 355; 75: 34-35; 76: 536), my wife and I observed comparable behaviour from an independent juvenile of this species that visited our garden in east Leicester on 30th and 31st August 1984.

On the evening of the first day and the morning of the next, it persistently engaged in 'frolicking', a form of in vacuo fleeing behaviour typical of many young passerines and described by the late Dr Margaret Morse Nice in 1943 (*Trans. Linn. Soc. N.Y.* 6: 51) as 'sudden, rapid runs or flights with sharp turns'. Our bird fluttered and twisted ('hooked') erratically thus just over the surface of the lawn and in and out among the border plants and a row of three small fir trees. On 31st, it also chased a male Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, a female House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, and another juvenile and an adult female Blackbird in a similar manner, inducing the last two to respond briefly with similar antics. Soon after, it started digging in the border and twice copulated with clumps of earth there, holding on with its bill and squatting down over them to make cloacal contact; it also copulated similarly once with a big leaf, but only after 'playing' with it: seizing, raising, and running with it.

Later the same day, an independent juvenile Song Thrush *T. philomelos* also performed brief frolicking actions in another border shortly after a spell of sunning, but, although we frequently monitor the birds from the house, these are our only records of such behaviour in this garden since we came here in 1981.

K. E. L. SIMMONS

66 Romway Road, Leicester LE5 5SB

Eric Simms has also drawn our attention to an earlier paper of his (*Brit. Birds* 58: 33-43), in which he described how a male Blackbird displayed to and attempted to copulate with a black lump of coal. EDS

Letters

Ptarmigan on Arran *BWP* (vol. 2) states incorrectly that the Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus* has been extinct on the Isle of Arran, Strathclyde, since the 19th century. In fact, the species has been present since 1972, when six were seen by John Orr on Am Binnein on 31st March. It has been observed every year since, up to the present (April 1985). The first breeding record after 1972 was in 1976, when a female with three young was seen by Bruce Anderson on Caisteal Abhail on 24th July.

For further information see *Scottish Bird Reports* (1972-83); *The Arran Naturalist* (1978-79); *The Birds of Arran—Annual Bird Reports* (1980-84); *Clyde Area Bird Report* (1978-80); and *A Regional Checklist of Clyde Birds* (1981).

MARGARET H. DUNN

Tigh-an-Droma, Kingscross, Isle of Arran KA27 8RG

Roding flight of Woodcock I was surprised to find *BWP* following the conventional description of the roding flight action of Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* as having 'slow, deliberate strokes of wings' (vol. 3, page 451). To my eye, it appears that, superimposed upon the basic rather slow action, there is a rapid, trembling flicker of the outer wing at least. The action is thus remarkably quick, rather than slow and deliberate in an exact sense, and far from the usual 'owl-like' interpretation.

R. A. HUME

15 Cedar Gardens, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1EY

British status of northern Lesser Black-backed Gulls P. J. Grant (1982, *Gulls: a guide to identification*) and *BWP* are in agreement that adults of the northern races *intermedius* and *fuscus* of the Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* are separable by consideration of their upperparts colour. Taking the jet black in the wing-tip as a reference, the upperparts colour of *intermedius*—almost as black as on the Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*—shows a slight but definite contrast with the wing-tip: this is well illustrated in plate 205 in Grant's book. The upperparts colour of *fuscus*—'as black as or blacker than *L. marinus*'—hardly contrasts with the wing-tip.

In the ten months January to October 1982, I carefully looked at all resting flocks of dark-backed Lesser Black-backs on the shingle areas of the RSPB Dungeness Reserve, Kent. Of the few thousand such birds encountered, all except one was *intermedius*, and there can be no doubt that (although '*intermedius*' is not yet a 'household word') this is the most abundant subspecies in southeast England outside the period June to early July, when it is completely absent.

The exceptional individual had a back of an intense sooty black, different in 'finish' but hardly in colour from that of the wing-tip. It occurred in September and is, in fact, the only individual referable to *fuscus* that I have

knowingly encountered. The question arises as to just how scarce *fuscus* is; as Grant points out, there are good reasons for not expecting many to occur in Britain. It would surely be of interest if observers, having familiarised themselves with the commonly occurring *intermedius*, looked critically for *fuscus* and submitted records to county recorders in the normal way, so that a picture might begin to emerge. In this connection, it must be pointed out that the painting captioned '*intermedius*' in *BWP* (vol. 3, plate 82) is of a bird with such a pale back that it is certainly not representative of that race.

I must express my gratitude to Dr J. V. van Viet for first explaining *intermedius* to me when we were confronted by an isolated individual in early July 1977 in Southwest Ireland; and to other Dutch gull enthusiasts and to P. J. Grant for subsequent discussions.

L. J. DAVENPORT

68 First Avenue, Gillingham, Kent ME7 2LG

The Buckinghamshire skua Having seen the skua *Stercorarius* at Willen Lake, Buckinghamshire, in November 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 101, plate 42), I must comment on Lars Jonsson's identification in his paper on 'Identification of juvenile skuas' (*Brit. Birds* 77: 443) of the Buckinghamshire bird as an Arctic *S. parasiticus* rather than a Pomarine Skua *S. pomarinus*. This identification, from a single black-and-white print taken from a colour transparency, clearly shows the problems which we all encounter each month in trying to solve the 'Mystery photographs'.

Jonsson stated that the lighting conditions make judgement of the somewhat Pomarine-like bill and forehead unreliable. If this is the case, then the lighting conditions must also affect the judgement of bill size and the angle of the gonys, features which he used to identify the bird as an Arctic.

If one accepts that all of these features are unsafe, and approach the identification of the Buckinghamshire skua using Lars Jonsson's plate, only three features fit identification as an Arctic Skua: buff tips to the primaries, buff lines on the edges of the outer webs of the greater coverts, and buff tips to the tertials. On studying the skin collection at the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Tring, however, these three features proved to be inconclusive for skua identification, since a few specimens of Pomarine Skua showed buff tips to their primaries, and buff lines on the outer webs of the greater coverts comparable with the Buckinghamshire skua. The tertial markings were an unsafe feature because both species were so variable.

These facts make the identification of the Buckinghamshire skua unreliable from the published photograph. Fortunately, however, the bird was present for three days, and its habit of drowning Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, taking them to some floating weeds by the shore-line and then feeding leisurely, allowed for perfect viewing conditions. The bird was identified as a Pomarine Skua because of its large size and bulky appearance, with broad base to the wings, deep keel, large contrasting bill and rounded central tail feathers. On studying notes and many photographs (e.g. plates 325-328) of the Buckinghamshire bird, it showed all of the features attributed to Pomarine Skua by Lars Jonsson, but it also had buff tips to the primaries, buff edges to the outer webs of the greater coverts



325-327. Juvenile Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Buckinghamshire, November 1982 (above and left, Dave Young; below, S. G. D. Cook)





328. Juvenile Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Buckinghamshire, November 1982
(S. G. D. Cook)

and buff tips to the tertials. As stated above, these are not safe identification features for Arctic Skua; indeed, the Buckinghamshire skua clearly proves this.

JEFF BLINCOW
48 Bush Hill, Northampton

The author sent additional photographs of the Buckinghamshire skua to Lars Jonsson, who agrees with its reidentification as Pomarine Skua. EDS

Incompatibility of Marsh and Willow Tits Like most birders, we encourage large numbers of tits *Parus* to feed on peanuts in our garden during the winter. The peak number of individuals of all species at any one time in recent winters has been 58. Both Marsh *P. palustris* and Willow Tits *P. montanus* are regular visitors, maxima having been three Marsh and two Willow. I have, however, never seen the two species together in the garden, where many individuals are now colour-ringed, facilitating identification. Has anyone seen these species together? None of my friends has. Do they avoid each other, and what are the implications if they do?

S. J. R. RUMSEY
Woodcote, Peter James Lane, Fairlight, East Sussex TN35 4AH

Requests for reprints It is clear from the correspondence (*Brit. Birds* 77: 216; 78: 153-154) that, like other controversies, the point of view taken on requests for reprints depends a lot on an individual's circumstances. While I sympathise with those who are inundated with requests, P. J. Grant is a lucky man indeed not to have needed to make one himself.

Some of us are amateur ornithologists for whom the opportunities to visit specialist libraries, let alone establishments containing all the literature we would require, are few and expensive. I personally have found it essential to request reprints, often from journals previously unknown to me; and the majority of these reprints come from professionals whose sponsoring bodies obviously pay the postage. My requests have occasionally led to more fruitful correspondence, and, as I have gained from such exchanges, I do not object to providing a reasonable number of reprints myself. Reprints sent at the cheapest rate of postage are not unduly expensive.

The banning of requests would be a drastic step, raising difficulties for amateur researchers remote from academic 'civilisation'. Perhaps an answer would be to indicate in some way the author's preparedness or ability to provide reprints.

NORMAN ELKINS

18 Scotstarvit View, Cupar, Fife KY15 4DX

I receive requests for my own reports, and have myself written for reprints of papers on topics that specially interest me. Not only is this sometimes the speediest method of gaining information, but it also means you have your own copy. Better still, authors often send related papers the existence of which one may have been unaware. In a few cases, fruitful correspondence results.

Ornithological 'serials', as librarians call them, increased from one in 1853 to 136 by 1963 (*The Status of Ornithological Literature* 1964, P. H. Baldwin and D. E. Oehlerts, Biological Abstracts Inc.), and must now be about 200. To help keep pace, the easy and willing exchange of reprints is vital. I am, therefore, sorry that Pete Marsh (*Brit. Birds* 77: 216) should feel as he does, and appalled that our editors often 'ignore' requests from North American universities for *British Birds* reprints (*Brit. Birds* 77: 216). Neither reaction tones with the spirit of scientific kinship.

JEFFERY BOSWALL

Birdswell, Wraxall, Bristol BS19 1JZ

Despite these (and similar letters from several other distinguished and prolific authors), we stand by our previous editorial comment (*Brit. Birds* 77: 216). Of course we respond to genuine requests—with letters of explanation—from fellow ornithologists; but impersonal, preprinted cards requesting 'something for nothing' from unknown names at large academic organisations in rich countries do not entice us to provide free copies at our own expense. We do, however, perhaps have a jaundiced view, since we receive so many such requests, and seldom a 'Thank you' when we have responded generously. Each author will take a personal stance. This correspondence is now closed. EDS

'Identification: it's a beginning' Dr Sharrock must be short of copy. If he is, it could be a decade before he decides to write 'This correspondence is now closed', for, if I am not mistaken, his thought-provoking 'Points of view' on 'Identification: it's a beginning' (*Brit. Birds* 77: 570) will produce a torrent of mail and cause a twitter amongst twitchers and the non-twitcher-

happy-enough-to-see-a-lesser-American-whatnot-found-by-someone-else. His short note follows 56 pages on rarities in Great Britain including nine excellent photographs in full colour, answering his own question on whether it is our fault that too many are obsessed by identification. 'Our' must refer to the contributors to and editors of *BB*. I have long thought that *BB* is really designed for twitchers, and that *Bird Study* is meant for 'serious' birders who would pretend not to notice an Asiatic or transatlantic 'mega-tick' if it fell in their lunch-box.

Most of us are vain enough to enjoy seeing our names in print—except perhaps in the *News of the World*. For many birders, the sole way of achieving this minor aura of immortality is not to spend thousands of hours studying the breeding biology of a single species, but to catch a glimpse of something exotic in the shrubbery. I am not against twitching in moderation, but, taken to excess (Fair Isle to Scilly and back in a weekend, or was it 24 hours?), it is as intellectually arid as collecting train-numbers. I enjoy seeing a new bird as much as do most birders, and boy! am I glad I did not 'dip out' on the Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* in Scilly in May 1984, but I am equally pleased that the bird pushed off before my peaceful holiday could be invaded by a *Scillonian*-full of eager-beavers. What I regret is that an equal amount of energy is not expended with similar enthusiasm on the common birds of one's own patch. I get a gut feeling that some birdwatchers refuse to take part in survey work because it 'lacks excitement'. In reality, survey work can be immense fun, as all dedicated participants attest to a man.

Between 1964 and 1978, I spent a good deal of my spare time putting together two volumes on the ornithology of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. There was no shortage of data on the county's enviable list of oddities. The difficulties concerned the common species, highlighted by the *Torrey Canyon* disaster (1967) when it proved almost totally impossible to assess its impact on breeding-bird populations because of inadequate information. Things have changed for the better with the publication of such monumental works as *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1976) and the eagerly awaited similar volume on wintering birds. It was a pleasure to me to have taken part in surveys for both these works, which are essential to provide basic information on which to build further knowledge.

Organising such a survey is no easy task, and I suspect that few counties are so well organised that, once the BTO or some other body announces a survey, an army of field-workers can give full 10-km square coverage at the drop of a hat. I have not had the time to organise a county survey for ten years, but, when I took charge of Cornwall in 1975 for the Rookery Census, it was hard going finding enough birdwatchers to cover the county once the small hard-core of survey -addicts had been enlisted. With the rising cost of postage, I do not envy successors who have to write scores of tailor-made letters to squeeze information out of potential contributors.

Not many of us can find sufficient time to take part in such commendable schemes as the Common Birds Census; perhaps some new scheme can be devised by the boffins allowing a greater number of people with less time in the field to contribute.

Birdwatching in Britain has long since passed the stage when identification was the principal object of the exercise. It is high time we all spent less time on 'What?' and more on 'When?', 'Where?' and 'How many?'. 'Why?', I suspect, is a different matter, perhaps best left to the professional biologists, though I am prepared to be convinced otherwise.

R. D. PENHALLURICK
County Museum, Truro, Cornwall

This correspondence is now closed. EDS

Foreign expeditions The report on 'Expeditions' (*Brit. Birds* 78: 323-327) was encouraging and showed that, instead of travelling merely for enjoyment, some recently planned expeditions have a potentially valuable purpose. There is a great need for ornithologists going abroad to help to fill the yawning gaps in our knowledge of the status of endangered species, of which there are now many hundreds. It is impossible for organisations such as the ICBP and the World Wildlife Fund to plan for the protection of rarities unless basic information about their distribution and status is available. The Red Data Books of Endangered Species show that in Africa, Asia and South America there are scores of species about which no information whatever has been obtained for up to 50 years. Even a single definite sighting would be valuable, providing that the exact map reference and habitat were accurately recorded. May I make a special plea to the organisers of expeditions to spend a day at the British Museum (Natural History) examining the skins of endangered species listed in the Red Books as likely to occur in the localities to be visited and to make an effort to locate and report on at least one of them? Those wondering where to take the next expedition will find plenty of enticing possibilities in the Red Books. For example, the forests of the Dahomey Gap and the escarpment of western Angola are in great need of exploration and contain many ultra-rare species. The same applies to the Sokoke Forest area of coastal Kenya and the southern coastal plains of Somalia, where the nine or ten local species of larks would satisfy even the most ardent birder. Finally, please make sure that copies of all ornithological expedition reports are sent to the ICBP at 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL.

GUY MOUNTFORT
Hurst Oak, Sandy Lane, Lyndhurst, Hampshire SO4 7DN

Diary dates

This list covers January to December 1986

3rd-5th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details from the Ringing Office, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR; tel.: Tring (044282) 3461.

21st January BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB. Dr Richard Chandler on 'Bird photography and waders'. Central London. Non-members should write (enclosing SAE) at least 21 days before to Hon. Secretary, R. E. F. Peal, 2 Chestnut Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3AR.

25th and 26th January YOC GARDEN BIRDWATCH. 9.00-10.00 a.m.

26th-29th January THIRD INTERNATIONAL PHEASANT SYMPOSIUM. Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand. Details from Keith Howman, World Pheasant Association, Ashmere, Felix Lane, Shepperton, Middlesex.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

31st January Closing date for 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs'.

14th-16th February BTO POPULATIONS CONFERENCE. Swanwick. 'Waders.' Details from Rob Fuller, BTO.

14th March Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.

18th March-13th May YOC MIGRATION PHONE-IN. Telephone Sandy (0767) 80551. Tuesdays only, 5.30 p.m.-7.00 p.m. Records from adults welcomed.

21st March SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB JUBILEE RECEPTION. Kelvingrove Museum & Art Gallery, Glasgow. Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

26th-30th March FIRST MEDITERRANEAN SEABIRD SYMPOSIUM. Alghero (Sardinia). 'Population studies and conservation of the Mediterranean marine avifauna.' Organised by the Mediterranean Marine Bird Association. Details from Mr Xaver Monbailliu, 20 rue St Martin, 75004 Paris, France.

2nd April BOC. Provisionally: Professor J. W. Terborgh on 'The decline in North American migrant birds'. Central London. Write to Hon. Sec.

5th April JOINT BTO/SOC SCOTTISH BIRDWATCHERS' CONFERENCE University of Aberdeen. Details from SOC.

11th-13th April RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. University of York. Details from Mrs Marcella Hume, RSPB.

12th April BTO ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. Gamston, Retford, Nottinghamshire. Details from Ted Cowley, Lincoln Cottage, Main Street, Clayworth, Retford; tel.: Retford (0777) 817799.

26th April BOU AGM. The Wildfowl Trust, Martin Mere, Burscough, Ormskirk, Lancashire. Details from BOU, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.

3rd-5th May YOC NATIONAL SPONSORED BIRDWATCH.

29th May WILDFOWL TRUST AGM.

22nd-29th June 19TH INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS. Ottawa, Canada. Information from Dr Henri Ouellet, Secretary General, XIX Congressus Internationalis Ornithologicus, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0M8.

18th-30th September SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10-5 Mon.-Fri., 10-1 Sat. Admission £1.00 (free to SWLA members).

31st October-2nd November SOC ANNUAL CONFERENCE AGM. Marine Hotel, North Berwick. Details from SOC.

5th-7th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Swanwick. Details from Tim Davis, BTO.

5th-7th or 12th-14th December NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS. National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. Details from Brian Byles, Editor, 'Cage and Aviary Birds', Surrey House, 1 Throwley Way, Surrey SM1 4QQ.

Sheila D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Announcements

Binding your 'BB's We should like to remind readers that standard book-binding of the year's issues into a single volume is available as usual, from P. G. Chapman & Co. Ltd (£11.50 per volume): please use the binding forms on the back cover of the index.

Sponsored by



Bird Photograph of the Year This annual competition will again be run by *British Birds* and sponsored by Matthew Gloag & Son Ltd, proprietors of 'The Famous Grouse' whisky. The full rules (similar to those last year, *Brit. Birds* 78: 56-57) will be published next month. The closing date is 31st January 1986.

Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs The closing date for submission of prints for the twenty-sixth annual selection is 31st January 1986. The full rules (similar to those last year, *Brit. Birds* 78: 57) will be published next month.

Request

Please help A distribution/despatch error has resulted in a severe shortage of October 1985 issues. If you are able to return an unwanted copy to us, we will gladly refund your postage. Thank you.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

If you're a naturalist Some birders, of course, are single-minded fanatics, interested in almost nothing else (sometimes not even their wives and families, their jobs or their own safety), but many birdwatchers have an interest in many other aspects of natural history. If you are in the latter category, you will greatly welcome the production by the newly formed Natural History Book Service Ltd of its newspaper-like catalogue of books and recordings on reptiles and amphibians, butterflies and moths, insects and other invertebrates, marine and freshwater life, flowering plants, non-flowering plants, trees, conservation, and just about everything in the natural world from algae and apes to woodlice and wolves. Produced in association with the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society, this 20-page, very browsable catalogue can be obtained free of charge from the

NHBS, 62 Tritton Road, London SE21 8DE.

(To correct a frequent misunderstanding, the NHBS does distribute books ordered through British BirdShop by *British Birds* subscribers, as part of a contract between British Birds Ltd and NHBS Ltd. But the NHBS is *not* a *British Birds* subsidiary!)

Interested in atlases? Two leaflets giving basic information are available free of charge from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology. *Biological Records Centre: a national data bank* is a six-page leaflet describing the work and objectives of the BRC. The eight-page booklet, *Current Atlases of the Flora & Fauna of the British Isles 1985*, compiled by Paul T. Harding, provides a reference list to the 49 atlases published so far (not just birds, but bumble-

bees, hoverflies, sedges, freshwater fishes, and many others). Birdwatchers could help in the mapping of many groups of animals and plants. If you are interested, write for your free copies from: Publication Sales, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Monks Wood Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon PE17 2LS.

Vermont gets there first July 1985 saw the publication of the first 'atlas' in the USA, 'The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Vermont' by Sarah B. Laughlin and Douglas P. Kibbe. British readers will find the format very familiar, since it closely resembles that of our own tome, even if the 'atlas priority block' recording system looks and sounds peculiar. The book covers 179 species and is the result of five years' fieldwork by over 200 observers. A review will be appearing in *BB* in due course.

'Essex Birds' Birdwatchers who live in Essex are very well served by what must be the most sophisticated and high quality county bulletin: well designed, well edited and as readable as any of the best high-circulation national magazines. At only 50p a copy, it must be worth birders in other counties buying one to see what *can* be done. Cheque or postal order for 50p (payable to the Essex Bird Watching & Preservation Society) to the Editor, Roy Billen, 111 Ingrave Road, Brentwood, Essex CM13 2AA.

Birds in Northumbria The 1984 edition of this county bird report is now available, price £3.00 including p&p, from Mrs M. Cadwalender, 32 Hanners Gardens, Seaton Delaval, Northumberland NE25 0DW.

Publications: a plea We try to publicise as many publications such as the two mentioned above as we possibly can—but if you want us to give you a plug *please* tell us (a) what your journal costs, including postage, and (b) where it is obtainable. Some we have received contained no information on either.

Money for David Hunt Memorial Fund So far, 154 copies of the late David Hunt's *Confessions of a Scilly Birdman* have been purchased through British BirdShop. Since Croom Helm Ltd, the publishers of the book, are donating 50p to the David Hunt Memorial Fund for every copy of the book sold through British BirdShop, the Fund will, so far, benefit to the tune of £77.00. If you have not yet ordered your copy, turn to page xiii.



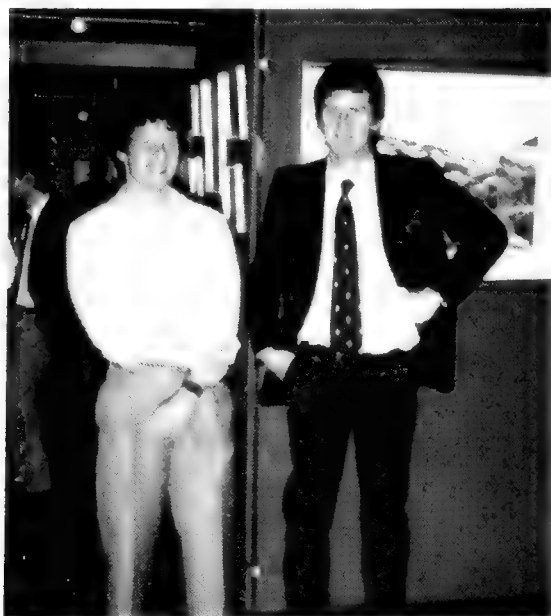
SWAN seeks your support The Society for Wildlife Art for the Nation, the brainchild of Dr David Trapnell, was established and recognised as a charity in 1982. Its main aim is to establish a gallery—as prestigious and respected as, for instance, the National Portrait Gallery—for the permanent exhibition of the best of wildlife art (paintings and sculptures, of course, but also photographs, and works in all media) from all historical periods and all nations of the world. Once established, travelling exhibitions will be arranged, and SWAN's other role will be in education, with courses and other training schemes.

SWAN's inaugural exhibition was opened by HRH Princess Alexandra on 4th October, and 173 pieces by 99 artists from 14 countries were on view at The Guildhall Art Gallery in London during 4th-12th October. It certainly whetted *this* visitor's appetite for a National Gallery of Wildlife Art.

After spending 18 months unsuccessfully seeking a suitable site in central London, SWAN has now found a possible home for the new National Gallery of Wildlife Art: Ashton Court, set in 330 ha of parkland on the edge of the City of Bristol. It is owned by the City, and a decision regarding its use has been promised 'towards the end of the year'.

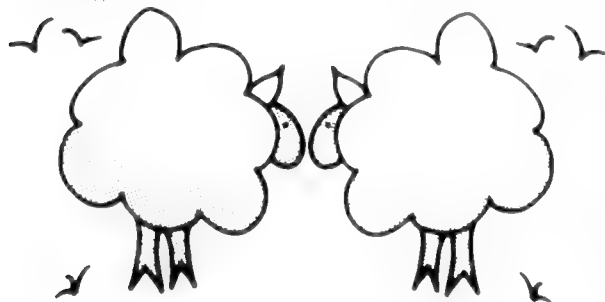
SWAN aims to raise several million pounds within the next year or so. Would this sum be better spent buying a wood or a marsh as a new wildlife reserve (as suggested by one conservationist)? I think not. The public's appreciation of wildlife would be greatly enhanced by a National Gallery of Wildlife Art, and there will no doubt be useful links between it (and its visitors) and the various conservation bodies. SWAN needs and deserves the support of birdwatchers. If you would like to receive details—and perhaps wish to become a member (it's only £10 a year)—please write to The Secretary, SWAN, 192 Ebury Street, London SW1W 8TP (Contributed by JTRS)

Artists' winning bonus As a result of their winning the titles of, respectively, 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' in 1984, Bruce Pearson and Keith Colcombe were invited to provide a display at Stevenage Leisure Centre during September 1985. This joint exhibition, dreamed up by ex LBC Radio (now Invicta Radio) reporter Magnus Carter, was given a good send-off, with a reception organised by the Stevenage Arts and Crafts Officer, Jackie Dyason. Within easy reach of the *BB* editorial office, the RSPB headquarters in Sandy and the BTO headquarters in Tring, the Stevenage Leisure Centre would be an ideal place for further such occasions in the future. We hope that the success of this year's show results in repeats being organised.



329. Keith Colcombe and Bruce Pearson at their joint exhibition, Hertfordshire, September 1985: see 'Artists' winning bonus' (Raymond Towler)

Congratulations Debbie! Debbie Cartwright, who has carried out the paste-up of *British Birds* each month since the journal went independent, was married on 2nd November to her business partner Nigel Felts (the other half of their company, Ewe Tree Designs).



Winning artist in 'Bird Life' This year's winner of 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award', Ian Lewington, provided the colour paintings to accompany a three-page feature on the identification of buntings in the feature 'Know your birds' in the YOC magazine, *Bird Life* (September/October 1985: pages 29-31). One of Ian Lewington's four winning drawings was of a pair of Reed Buntings (see this year's frontispiece). This is one more welcome example of the close links and co-operation between the YOC and *BB*.

Scandinavian twitchers get organised

There has been a great upsurge of twitching in Scandinavia during the 1980s. Inevitably, conflicts between birders and landowners, birds or ringing stations have occurred. The conflicts have been rare, compared with the many successful, non-problematic twitches, but they do receive great attention, especially from non-twitchers. Besides following the code for twitchers published in *British Birds* (75: 301-303), organisations for twitchers have started in Sweden ('Club 300' in 1984) and in Finland ('Bongari Liitto' in March 1985).

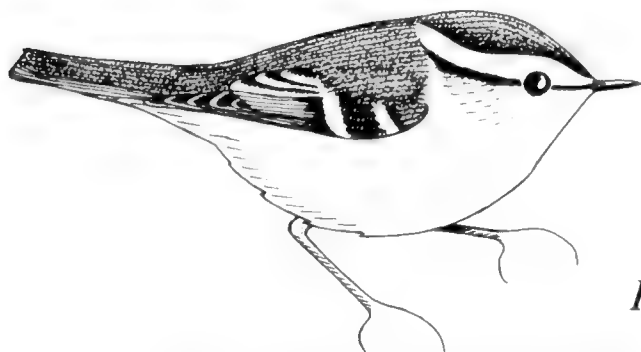
The Finnish organisation contains 100 members and aims to control the spreading of news of rarities, to increase the knowledge of field identification, and to supervise its members' behaviour at twitch sites. In contrast to the Swedish 'Club 300' (which limits membership to birders with 300 or more on their national lists), anyone can join the Finnish 'Bongari Liitto'. As a member, it is compulsory to report news on all newly discovered rarities (defined as species with less than 100 national records). If the bird is found in a sensitive area (e.g. private property, somewhere with a rare breeding species nearby, and so on), a working team in the club judges whether or not the news should be released. This team has the right to send a non-twitcher to the area to make an assessment at the site. Of course, landowners' as well as local birders' opinions are always taken into account.

With increasing pressure on birds, on land and on people from birders, we can only hope that these organisations grow strong enough to prevent degenerate varieties of twitching. (Contributed by Erik Hirschfeld)

Will Britain follow suit? We have often wondered whether British twitchers will ever form clubs, leagues, or whatever, or whether

the present loose association with its grapevine, its growing folklore and oral traditions, its 'organised chaos' and its highly moveable feasts will be all we shall ever see. Do we want to follow the Fenno-Scandian example, or that of the American Birding Association? What do *you* think? Let us have your views and we will attempt to analyse them and report back.

Arctic underwear? If we ever rose to offering a prize for the 'misprint of the month', the *Oban Times* (26th July 1985) would take some beating. In advertising the ill-fated public meeting over Duich Moss at Bowmore on Islay it made mention of the 'Greenland Y-fronted Goose Study'. Our thanks to A. A. Wright of Tobermory, Isle of Mull, for bringing this gem to our attention!



Recent reports

Keith Allsopp and Ian Dawson

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

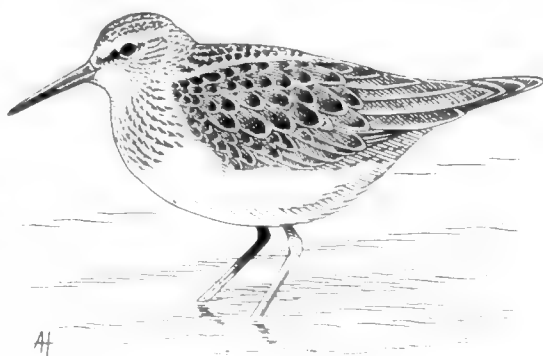
The dates in this report refer to September unless otherwise stated.

Westerly to northwesterly winds, strong at times, brought cool unsettled weather for the first week. From 7th, an increase in pressure to the south moved the track of the Atlantic depressions farther north and, with the winds now bringing air in from the south, temperatures were near or above average. After 18th, the centre of pressure moved to the east over Europe, and southerly to southeasterly winds became more frequent towards the end of the month.

Wading birds

The strong westerlies early in the month brought a good selection of Nearctic birds, especially to Ireland, where Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) was the star locality, with six species being recorded. Up to six **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis* were found there, others being reported from Dawlish (Devon), with three on 5th, Davidstow (Cornwall) during 1st-6th (plate 331), Dale (Dyfed), with two on 7th, two more in the Isles of Scilly and, in the east, singles at Wisbech Sewage-farm (Cambridgeshire) on 8th, Cromer (Norfolk) on 14th, and Spurn (Humberside) on 15th.

There were just two records of **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *Calidris pusilla*: one during the first week, at Akeragh (Co. Kerry), and the other in the third, at Tacumshin, where there were also two **Baird's Sandpipers** *C. bairdii*. The latter species was also present at Ballycotton (Co. Cork) from 6th to 10th (plates 339 & 340) and at Frodsham (Cheshire) from 7th (plates 337 & 338). A **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* was another find at Tacumshin, on 3rd, with others seen at Peterstone (Gwent) on 14th, Hayle (Cornwall), and Heybridge (Essex) on 29th. Records of **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus tricolor* were also not confined to the west, with not only one from Tacumshin and two from Dublin, but also others from Tees-side.



first seen in August, Cresswell Ponds (Northumberland) on 1st, Holy Island (Northumberland) on 5th, and Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) and Upton Warren (Hereford & Worcester) both on 14th. The other Tacumshin species was **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos*, two of the 18 reported being there, with others east to Norfolk (plate 330), and as many as four each at Ballycotton and Minsmere (Suffolk). Further autumn sightings included **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* at Blacktoft (Humberside) at the end of August and at Severn Beach (Avon) on 13th. **Lesser Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* at Fair Isle, Akeragh on 16th and Ballycotton on 25th, a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* at Lea Marston (Warwickshire), and a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* near Tralee (Co. Kerry) on 15th. Rarities from easterly origins were sparse: the **Little Whimbrel** *Numenius minutus* remained at Cley (Norfolk) into September, a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* was again reported from Fair Isle on 7th, and a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* was present at Broad Lough (Co. Wicklow) from 8th to 11th. The most noticeable wader movement was an influx of juvenile **Curlew Sandpipers** *Calidris ferruginea* (plate 332), with many flocks over 20 and an inland maximum of 170 at Wisbech Sewage-farm on 22nd. The movement of **Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* reported late in August continued, with one at Blakeney Point (Norfolk) (plate 333), ten at Rottingdean (Kent) and eight at Beachy Head (East Sussex) on 1st, and further reports late in the month from Abberton (Essex), with three on 22nd, Sandwich Bay (Kent), with two on 23rd, and singles at Newton Longville (Buckinghamshire) and Porthgwarra (Cornwall) on 24th and 25th. **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius* were seen in small numbers on seawatches, with a maximum of 12 at Portrush (Co. Antrim) on 15th; and **Red-necked Phalaropes** *P. lobatus* were found inland at Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire) on 8th and at Elmley (Kent) on 28th and 29th. A late migrating **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedipnemus* was a first for Walney (Cumbria) on 28th. **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* were widely reported, with eight records received, which for such a secretive bird must indicate quite an influx. More obvious were a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* at Salthouse (Norfolk) on 8th, a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* at Titchfield (Hampshire) and a **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* at Carlisle (Cumbria) from 2nd until taken into care on 22nd.

Seabirds

The strong westerlies at the beginning of the month brought many seabirds inshore, with fewer on a subsequent blow on 14th and 15th.

Leach's Petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were susceptible on both occasions: about 100 were in Fishguard Harbour (Dyfed) on 3rd and 90 were estimated off the Calf of Man on 15th. Apart from one **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea* on 16th at Walney, the larger shearwaters were seen early in the month: one Cory's and two **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis* at St Ives and three Cory's and two Greats at Pendeen (Cornwall) on 3rd. There were also three Great Shearwaters off Malin Head (Co. Donegal) on 1st, during a seawatch with an estimated 3,000 **Sooty Shearwaters** *P. griseus* passing, which must have made an impressive sight; there were also 180 Sooties at Pendeen on 3rd. **Little Shearwaters** *P. assimilis* were claimed at Bridges of Ross (Co. Clare) on 31st August, Strumble Head (Dyfed) on 3rd and off the Isle of Man on 14th. 'Blue phase' **Fulmars** *Fulmarus glacialis*



330. Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Norfolk, September 1985 (Steve Young)

were also recorded during these watches, with two at Malin Head, three at Corsewall Point (Dumfries & Galloway) and one at Portrush, all on 1st, and one at sea, west of the Isles of Scilly, on 4th. Most sightings of **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini* occurred on the West Coast watches, 13 being the most, at St Ives on 3rd, but a few were seen on the East Coast on the following days; one at Ballycotton provided superb views (plates 334-336). Some 25 **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus* were seen, again mainly on seawatches, but one was reported inland at Tring (Hertfordshire) from 1st to 4th, with **Pomarine Skuas** *S. pomarinus* in similar numbers and localities. **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* were not reported from England, but 'a few present' was the assessment for Ireland. The return of winter-



331. Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Cornwall, September 1985 (Graham Sutton)

ing **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus* was noted from Cley and Cumbria, with others seen on passage. Interesting records were of 15 **Roseate Terns** *Sterna dougallii* at Tynemouth (Tyne & Wear) on 1st followed by ten at St Mary's Island (Tyne & Wear) on 8th, and of **Forster's Terns** *S. forsteri* at Clogher Head (Co. Louth) for the whole of the month and at Hayle on 20th.

Small migrants

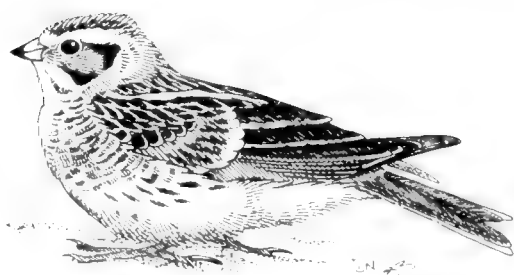
Very few passerine migrants were found at most observatories, with no significant falls, but vagrant species were reported in increasing numbers as the weather became quieter

and more easterly. A **Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* and a 'Siberian' **Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* on Fair Isle were found during the first week, as were **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* on the Isles of Scilly and at Walney on 3rd, and a **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* at Ballycotton on 6th. A few **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* were found on the South Coast. **Melodious Warblers** *Hippolais polyglotta* at Portland (Dorset) and Hengistbury Head (Dorset) on 9th and at Walney on 11th, three **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola* at Slapton (Devon), again early in the month, and a **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* on

332. Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, Humberside, September 1985 (John Hewitt)



Jersey on 10th. In the north, a **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* stayed on the Isle of May (Fife) from 8th to 10th, and a **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* and a **Little Bunting** *E. pusilla* appeared on Fair Isle on 11th. Two more Little Buntings were found in Orkney, on 24th and 29th, and a **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *E. aureola* on Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) on 11th was followed by others on Fair Isle and North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 22nd. There were a few widely scattered records of **Ortolan Buntings** *E. hortulana*, **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina* and **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria*, all around mid month. Seven **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* were found in Orkney and one at Portland (Dorset) on 15th, where an **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* was reported on the same day. From 22nd, the change to a more southeasterly origin for the air reaching Britain and Ireland brought quite a large influx of **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus*; 25 were estimated in Orkney from 23rd, 15 in northeast England and several down the East Coast to Suffolk. Subsequently, singles were found at Walney on 26th, on Great Saltee (Co. Wexford) on 28th and in Jersey (Channel Islands) also on 28th. **Arctic Warblers** *P. borealis* were found on South Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 24th, and in the Southwest, on Lundy (Devon) on 30th; and a **Bonelli's Warbler** *P. bonelli* at Sennen (Cornwall) on 23rd. Three **Pechora Pipits**



Anthus gustavi were present on Fair Isle between 22nd and 28th, four further records of **Richard's Pipits** came from North Ronaldsay, Porthgwarra (Cornwall), Hengistbury Head and Blakeney (Norfolk), and more **Tawny Pipits**. **Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* were seen in the Isles of Scilly, and there was one at Porthgwarra on 24th. **Lapland Buntings** *Calcarius lapponicus* began appearing in the south, and an immature **Red-headed Bunting** *Emberiza bruniceps*, considered very likely to have been a genuine vagrant, was found on Fair Isle. Reports of **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* were widely scattered and included three at Walney on 26th; **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* showed a similar pattern. Other notable finds were a **Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* in the Isles of Scilly from 23rd, a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* on the Wirral (Merseyside) on 28th, **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* on Tyneside on 23rd and North Ronaldsay on 26th, and a **Serin** *Serinus serinus* at Sandwich Bay on 21st.

333. Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, Norfolk, September 1985 (Steve Young)



A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** *Dendroica pensylvanica*—potentially a new species for Britain and Ireland—was reported from Fetlar (Shetland) on 19th, and a **Northern Parula** *Parula americana* caused great excitement at Hengistbury Head on 30th. Interesting movements of commoner birds included 20,000 **House Martins** *Delichon urbica* at Sandwich Bay on 14th and noticeable flocks of **Siskins** *Carduelis spinus* on the coast and inland. A record reported too late for inclusion last month was of a **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* at Pennington Flash (Greater Manchester) on 16th August.

Birds of prey

A **Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was a new species for Walney on 1st, a **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* was reported at Henham (Suffolk) on 1st, and a **Saker** *F. cherrug* from North Ronaldsay.

334-336. Juvenile Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Co. Cork, September 1985 (*Richard T. Mills*)

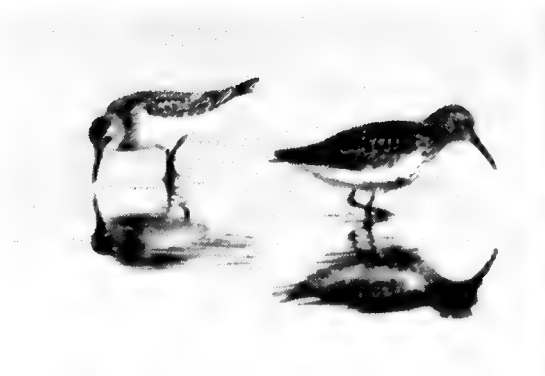


Latest news

The most spectacular and widely noted event of the first half of November was the occurrence of large numbers of **Pomarine Skuas** along the British east coast from Shetland in the north to at least Norfolk in the south, and smaller numbers elsewhere, including some inland (e.g. three at Grafham Water, Cambridgeshire). The eventual total may run into thousands, for daily totals of 100-200 appear to have been recorded at many localities.

Among rarities, long-stayers included the West Sussex **Sora** *Porzana carolina* and **Sociable Plover** *Chettusia gregaria*, and the Suffolk **Long-billed Dowitcher** and **Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes*.





337 & 338. Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*
(and with Dunlin *C. alpina*), Cheshire,
September 1985 (Steve Young)

339 & 340. Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Co. Cork, September 1985 (Richard T. Mills)



Short reviews

Oxford Illustrated Encyclopedia. The Natural World. Edited by Dr Malcolm Coe. (OUP, 1985. £15.95) It would be unreasonable to expect a work of this magnitude to be entirely error free. In quite a lot of dipping (which is how one does use an encyclopedia in practice), I have, however, managed to find none. This does suggest that Dr Malcolm Coe and his team, and the designers and proof readers of Rainbird Publishing Group and Oxford University Press, have done a very thorough job. That is more than half the requirement for a good encyclopedia: accuracy must be assumed. The second major requirement is suitability of content. My dipping to find selected headings was almost always successful and it was rare for me to consider that a particular entry was markedly too long (or too short) for its relative importance. Compared with some other natural history encyclopedias, this one is perhaps slightly under illustrated, but the photographs and drawings are very appropriate in each case, and a number were new to me and particularly interesting for that reason. For its accuracy and good balance, this must be a very good choice for anyone who wants a sound general natural history encyclopedia. **Die Teichralle. By Helmut Engler.** (Die Neue Brehm-Bucherei 536. A. Ziemsen Verlag, 1983. DM 26.40). This scholarly monograph on the Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* couples original data with information gleaned from an exhaustive literature search. Well-illustrated, well-referenced and well worth a look, especially for the breeding biology and behaviour sections. The 228-page text of this paperback is unremittingly German. [K. TAYLOR] **The Starling. By C. J. Feare.** (Shire Publications, 1985. £1.25) This and *The Puffin* by Jim Flegg (see below) are attractively produced 24-page booklets in a new series from this well-known publisher of short guides to a wide variety of country and craft subjects. Both make excellent use of good quality colour photographs and the texts are as accurate and comprehensive, within their length, as one would expect from these two experts in their respective fields. Good value introductions for the non-specialist. [MAO] **The Puffin. By Jim Flegg.** (Shire Publications, 1985. £1.25) See review of *The Starling* by C. J. Feare (above). **Birds in the Town. By Peter Gill.** (Dinosaur Publications,

1985. Paperback, £1.25) This little (24-page) booklet is very well thought out, with good text and delightful illustrations, suitable for the five- to ten-year-old. There is lots of behaviour depicted, as well as pure portraits. One criticism only: the two pages with pictures of Kingfisher, Pied Wagtail and Mute Swan both show the Mute Swan as being distinctly smaller than either of the other two; and, indeed, the Pied Wagtail seems to be marginally larger than the fisherman at the same range. **Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of Australia. By David Hollands.** (Natural History Book Service, 1985. £25.00) It would be all too easy to dismiss this attractive new volume from Down Under as just another coffee-table book. It is nothing of the sort: David Hollands has contrived to give us two dozen nicely written and very evocative accounts of the Australian raptors he has sought out and studied and—quite brilliantly—photographed. The plates are superb. There are many nest portraits, but there are also many away from the nest, including some useful flight shots. It is hard to select the best, but a personal selection would include the incredible white-phase Grey Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae*, a line of Letter-winged Kites *Elanus scriptus* on fence-posts, and a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* almost catching a Galah *Eolophus roseicapillus*. Highly recommended! [MIKE EVERETT] **Portrait of a Country Artist: C. F. Tunnicliffe RA. By Ian Niall.** (Gollancz, 1985. Paperback £6.95) High-quality paperback version of the book described by Robert Gillmor (*Brit. Birds* 73: 604) as 'A must for all who enjoy birds and bird art, and excellent value too!', now even cheaper than it was when first published in 1980. **British Bird Names (English, Esperanto, Latin, Français, Deutsch). Compiled by Edward Ockey.** (World Language Books, 1985. 50p) Ringokolombo (Woodpigeon), Junkokanbirdo (Sedge Warbler) and about 270 other common species rendered in Esperanto, their clumsy artificiality convincingly demonstrating all that is wrong with that pseudo-language. If you want French and German names, the 'Peterson' field guide is far more complete than this 16-page duplicated pamphlet. [MAO] **Die Bachstelze. By Helmut Ölschlegel.** (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 571. A. Ziemsen Verlag, 1985. Paperback

DM22.80) This and *Die Amsel* by Burkhard Stephan (see below) are two more in this excellent series. *Die Bachstelze* is on the Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* and, as usual, provides a very full account of the biology of the species, with many photographs, though apparently based on limited personal research. [SC] **Quadrige Poster Charts: birds of prey.** (Quadrige, 1985. £3.50) The publishers of this poster measuring 70 × 100 cm are doing neither birds of prey nor the public any service. The design is non-existent and the standard of artwork appalling. What a pity some publishers seem reluctant to use recognised bird artists or to turn to experts for advice. [PETER HOLDEN] **Bats.** By Phil Richardson. Illustrated by Guy Troughton. (Whittet Books, 1985. £4.95) A delightful little book, clearly designed to popularise the study of bats. A rather weird mixture of scientific fact and lighthearted humour, accurate drawings and amusing cartoons. But, somehow, it works, to produce a balanced introduction to these mammals for the non-bat-expert. Guy Troughton's drawings greatly add to the book's appeal. **Die Amsel.** By Burkhard Stephan. (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 95. A.

Ziemsen Verlag, 1985. Paperback DM28.00) See review of *Die Bachstelze* by Helmut Ölschlegel (above). This one covers the Blackbird *Turdus merula*, but has some curious gaps in the bibliography, with no reference to Dr D. W. Snow's famous book. [SC] **Out of the Wild.** By Mike Tomkies. (Jonathan Cape, 1985. £10.95) Episodes from his Scottish encounters with wildlife by this ex-journalist who now lives in a remote cottage in a Highland glen, accessible only by boat. The animals all have names—Cedric the fox, Wallie the owl, Liane the wildcat, and so on—but the author knows his countryside and its inhabitants and writes interestingly. **Island: diary of a year on Easdale.** By Vicky and Garth Waite. (Century, 1985. £10.95) For my taste, this is too close visually to a certain Edwardian lady's country diary. It is the account of their first year on a tiny island near Oban, by a newly married, and newly retired, couple delighting in all aspects of the natural world around them. The masses of coloured drawings are rather woolly and twee. [ROBERT GILLMOR]

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Reviews

Bird Behaviour. By Robert Burton. Granada, London, 1985. 224 pages; over 500 colour plates. £10.95.

The casual purchaser may be put off, and could certainly be misled, by the title of this book if expecting it to contain essays on aspects of bird behaviour—courtship display, territorial defence, and so on—as it is normally but narrowly defined. Instead, Robert Burton has chosen (quite properly) to cover as many aspects as possible of bird behaviour, which, loosely defined, means pretty well everything that birds do, routinely or otherwise, as they go about their daily and yearly lives. As it starts with breathing and flying, and then progresses, it could effectively be simply called *Bird Biology*.

Thus, the ten constituent chapters cover 'The living bird' (including adaptation and physiology); 'Flight' (including moult); 'Senses and intelligence'; 'Finding food' (including more adaptation and optimal foraging); 'Diet and way of life' (including co-evolution with plants); 'Communication' (including sexual selection); 'Social Life'; 'Courtship and mating'; 'Rearing the young'; and 'Migration'. All in all, this is an impressive scenario.

The publisher's blurb comments on the quantity of colour illustration, which, at several photos per page, is undeniably true. Sheer quantity has its drawbacks though, necessitating small size for many of them; there are also occasional examples of poor quality, so one must confess (unusually) to wondering if there are not *too* many. The 'many scientists' on whom the

book depends may have cause for complaint that, while photographers are scrupulously acknowledged, nowhere is there any reference to published written work. Additionally, this is an unhelpful aspect for those wishing to read on more deeply.

That said, this book is a good and useful text, well presented and easily digested. Covering the whole of bird biology in just over 200 pages inevitably implies selective or superficial treatment and a prevalence of sweeping statements, but the examples are generally both well chosen and interestingly linked together into a coherent theme. Well worthwhile at the price.

JIM FLEGG

A First Book of Birds. By Peter Holden and J. T. R. Sharrock, illustrated by Norman Arlott. Macmillan Children's Books, London & Basingstoke, 1984. 35 pages; 58 colour illustrations. Hardback £3.50; paperback £1.25.

The British can often be accused of having a very Victorian attitude to children—'Little boys and girls should be seen and not heard'—and they are rarely welcomed in restaurants or other public places. Thank goodness nature conservation societies do not have the same attitude, as children are the next generation, in whose custody we are going to leave what remains of our precious wildlife.

Both the RSPB's Young Ornithologists' Club and the RSNCR's WATCH groups provide a variety of lively projects and publications for young people, to which this book is a most useful addition. It comes jointly from the pens of YOC National Organiser, Peter Holden, and the Managing Editor of *British Birds*, Tim Sharrock.

The book is written for the five- to nine-year-old just starting out on birdwatching. Covering only 68 of our most common birds, it is not going to overwhelm any child, and my own four-year-old could name 28 of them. Two more and he will be eligible to claim his special 'Birdwatcher's Badge' from the YOC.

The birds are arranged by families, with very clear, attractive, colour illustrations by Norman Arlott. The short, succinct text on each species has been carefully written with children in mind, to help identification and the understanding of the way the birds live. It is always difficult to decide whether to arrange such a book by habitat or by families. I feel that the younger children could respond better to a habitat order, perhaps starting with the birds seen in the garden; an unfamiliar bird, such as the Cormorant on the first page, might deter some children. The format chosen will, however, lead the older age group naturally on to the use of adult field guides, and the illustrations do very cleverly hint at each bird's habitat.

I hope that this well-produced book—which at £1.25 for the paperback is excellent value—will encourage many children to take up birdwatching, and lead them on to an interest in conservation of our countryside.

LINDA BENNETT

Confessions of a Scilly Birdman. By David Hunt. Croom Helm, London, 1985. 174 pages; 17 black-and-white plates; 61 line-drawings. £8.95.

David Hunt's autobiography is written in a readable, lively style that maintains one's interest and provides a detailed account of his life from his earliest memories right up to his tragic death earlier this year. Many of the characters and scenes are illustrated by Bryan Bland's excellent caricatures and bird portraits as well as David's own photographs. Having spent a lot of time in both Norfolk and the Isles of Scilly, I could readily picture many of the events which took place in those areas. This may have added to my enjoyment of the book, especially as so many of the characters in it are, of course, still part of the birding scene today. David's school-days in Norfolk seemed particularly real to me, with his accounts of bicycle trips from Holt to Cley and car excursions farther afield in search of birds being particularly atmospheric. His description of events in Scilly also fascinated me and filled in a lot of background to the Scilly scene both of the past and of today.

When I started visiting Scilly in the early 1970s, I heard many tales about David and his unusual life-style. The book confirms some of these stories, though it puts many of them into better perspective and perhaps explains why, even in those days, David always seemed a little abrasive on first meeting. Since getting to know him properly in more recent years, I always

found him to be both friendly and helpful, though I was still occasionally taken-aback by the blunt way in which he sometimes treated new faces, especially if they stepped out of line or said something stupid. I hope that reading this book will help people who did not know him well to come to understand a little better the complex person that he was, and perhaps appreciate more the changes that he had to deal with over a 20-year period from the days when a handful of birdwatchers used to stay on St Agnes each September to nowadays, when thousands of birders go to St Mary's each October. David coped remarkably well with the problems that arose, especially in recent times, and I hope that his achievements in establishing good relations between visiting birders and island residents will last for many years to come. Certainly, without his presence, autumn on Scilly will never be quite the same again. We are indeed fortunate that part of his autobiography chronicles the scene from the mid 1960s to the mid 1980s and the important part that he played in it. Any birdwatcher who visited Scilly during David's residency will undoubtedly enjoy reading his book. DAVID FISHER

A Sound Guide to the British Hawks and Falcons; Breeding Waders; Thrushes; Warblers; Tits; Finches. Set of six cassettes, recorded, compiled and produced by Victor C. Lewis. Lyonshall, 1984, 1985. £4.50 + 50p p&p each; any three cassettes £12.00 + £1.00 p&p.

These six cassettes, with a playing time of 32 minutes each (except for 'Warblers' at 35 minutes), are presented in familiar plastic boxes with black-and-white inlay cards. Each card gives a brief introduction, followed by details of the calls and songs presented. Six recordings are by Pat Sellar, but the rest all by Victor C. Lewis. Coverage varies from a single call-type for some species to nine types for the Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*. There is sometimes further variation within one example, as with the songs of some of the tits *Parus*. Each species is introduced by voice on the tape, then each example labelled by voice with a number. Numbers run consecutively throughout each side of the tapes to make any particular example easy to find without having to hear the species' name. It is then necessary to turn to the inlay card to find brief but informative details of just what each example portrays (for instance, contact calls, extreme alarm with predator near the nest, fledgling calling to parent, female soliciting for food, and so on). The voice-labelling sounds a little old-fashioned (though I cannot suggest a better alternative), and the cards are rather dull in their presentation, but it is the recordings which really matter; the packaging will not necessarily help to sell them, though. Coverage is generally excellent, with just a few surprise omissions (such as the typical flight-calls of Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* and Siskin *Carduelis spinus*). Recordings of known calls heard in isolation, out of context in a living room instead of in a wood, or on a marsh, can either be very evocative or embarrassingly hard to place without the usual clues available in the field. Sometimes, from the recording, it is not always easy to assess the volume of a call. The loud, abrupt effect of Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* calls come over well, but could the Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* calls be equally loud but just farther away? If the example were not so familiar, the answer might be uncertain. I found a few recordings less useful than I had hoped (I liked Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* song, and 'chuffing' calls, and the Willow Tit *Parus montanus* very much, but the Blackcap *S. atricapilla* and Marsh Tit *P. palustris* less so). Mostly, however, they are very good, and worth frequent reference. This is a helpful, comprehensive set of recordings, with quite a few less-well-known vocalisations to add to the more usual songs and calls: it really is a sound guide, not just a set of attractive songs. R. A. HUME

Newman's Birds of Southern Africa. By Kenneth Newman. Macmillan, London, 1985. 461 pages; 209 colour plates. Paperback £8.95.

When I agreed to review this book, I thought that it would be an easy task: simply to praise the first-ever comprehensive field guide to any sub-Saharan region of Africa. As I started to look more closely at the illustrations and text, however, I discovered some errors and omissions, but these must be considered in the context of the book as a whole. There is no doubt that it is far better than any previous African field guide and should be used by everyone visiting Africa on a birdwatching trip. Unlike so many other guides, all the illustrations are in colour, many species are shown in flight as well as perched, and colour-phases and races are often included. The guide illustrates over 900 species (over 45% of the total African list) and, as many of these

occur throughout sub-Saharan Africa, will be very useful in both east and west Africa as well (for example, it illustrates 62% of the species that I have seen in Kenya, and 67% of those that I have seen in The Gambia). The popular field guides covering those areas only poorly illustrate such groups as flying raptors, which this guide tackles comprehensively, and many other groups are also covered in greater detail.

The best way to judge a field guide is, of course, to examine the illustrations and accounts of the species you are most familiar with, so I started by looking at waders, raptors, gulls, terns and warblers. I quickly unearthed a number of problems. I suspect that the plates were painted over a lengthy period, as a variety of styles is evident, some of which are far more successful than others. For example, the bee-eaters, kingfishers and rollers seem much too feathery, as if drawn from skins; the Palearctic warblers seem very wooden, and are all in skin-like positions; yet the larks are both life-like and convincing. Shape varies from group to group, in some places seeming very accurate (some of the seabirds), but in others being positively misleading; compare the dumpy Kestrel with the slender Lesser Kestrel. Details of plumage are also sometimes not as accurate as they should be. For example, the flying Lesser Kestrel is shown as having blue-grey secondaries as well as secondary coverts. I was even more concerned by the apparent lack of awareness in regard to the separation of similar (though not necessarily difficult) species. In regard to Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, we are told 'Immatures of both species inseparable, except in second year when traces of back colour become evident': a statement hardly likely to encourage critical gull-watching in Africa. The flight illustration of a pratincole is meant to cover both Collared and Black-winged and yet the 'Black-winged' wing has a broad white trailing edge to the secondaries and no mention is made of the lack of contrast between the upperparts and the flight feathers of that species. There are separate illustrations of perched female Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, though only one flight illustration to cover both species. In the Pallid text, however, we are told 'females indistinguishable from female Montagu's Harrier unless paler facial details are discernible', presumably referring to Pallid's pale collar behind the ear coverts? The illustrations fail to show this feature adequately.

Whenever I find errors or omissions of this kind amongst the birds that I know well (sadly, a frequent occurrence in most field guides), it undermines my confidence in the rest of the book. How can I be sure that there are not similar errors in the accounts of the species that I have never seen; indeed, it seems likely that there will be. I appreciate that it is almost impossible to produce a field guide covering hundreds of species without some errors creeping in, but, as these guides are aimed at helping people to identify birds with which they are not familiar, they surely should be as accurate as possible and should not contain misleading information. If a second edition is planned, I do hope that care is taken to consult a selection of other experienced birdwatchers so that these errors can be corrected.

Having said all this, I still recommend this guide as the best field guide to African birds currently available. If you are going to any part of Africa, take a copy with you. It will help enormously; but do bear in mind that it is not perfect.

DAVID FISHER

The Bird-walker: a dictionary of the voices of birds of Britain, Europe and North Africa. By Jean C. Roché. Set of three cassettes. L'Oiseau Musicien, Viens, 1985. £16.00 (incl. postage in UK).

These cassettes are meant to be taken into the field, with a personal stereo player, so that unidentified bird sounds can be tracked down. The birds are subdivided into 'North' (principally those found in Britain) and 'South' (those rare, if heard at all, in Britain), and 'Large' and 'Small', so that, given knowledge of location and the size of the bird, the listener can then select the right cassette and listen through it or wind on to the right group if he knows roughly what the bird may be. On each cassette, the birds are arranged alphabetically, under the group name (so, for example, all warblers, all tits and all gulls are together under W, T and G, respectively, except for odd names such as Blackcap and Kittiwake). It may, therefore, seem to fall at the first hurdle: many birds in the North occur in the South too, if not so much vice versa. And if you can see what size the bird is, could you not identify it on sight? If you can only hear it, how do you know how big it might be?

Thus, the 'bird-walker' idea might be impractical at times. But what of the recordings themselves? They are terrific! Many are from the guides produced by 'l'Institut ECHO' (now

L'Oiseau Musicien) in 1975, but many new recordings and nearly 150 new species have been added. Now, 406 species are covered, each clearly announced in English, usually with more than one example per species (generally at least 'calls and song'). With the volume adjusted so that the announcements are not too loud, the bird calls sound perfect, very lifelike and very clear. They are amongst the best I have heard. The series is admirably complete and, as well as including the clear recordings necessary for identification, manages also to evoke a powerful atmosphere on a good many tracks, so that the excitement of a Gannet colony, or a flock of geese, or the wild song of a godwit, or the discovery of a singing rarity or a Mediterranean *Sylvia* warbler, all come back complete with the sight, smell and weather associated in the mind with the past experience. And how I would like to catch up with some of the beautiful sounds I have not yet heard first-hand. Such excellent sound recordings have a very strong effect.

R. A. HUME

Birdwatching in Kent. By Don Taylor. Meresborough Books, Gillingham, 1985. 151 pages; 13 black-and-white plates; 13 line-drawings. Paperback, £4.50.

If you are a Kentish birdwatcher, or if you are thinking of visiting the county, this well-produced paperback will show you at a glance (by means of delightfully simple one-line distribution charts) when in the year you may expect to see each species in the county's systematic list (based on the records during 1970-83). That out-of-the-ordinary and very useful source of references takes up the final half of the book. Before then, there are ten pages on Kentish habitats, chapters on the author's detailed study of the birds of Langley Park Farm (an example of work on a 'local patch'), some good 'May Days', and his attempt (in 1977) to see as many species as possible in the county in a year. There is also a chapter entitled 'Birdwatching Calendar', which makes suggestions of places to go in Kent in each month of the year, and predicts what might be seen if you took that advice.

Thus, this is far from being another ordinary county avifauna. It is a very personal account, which could have been written only by Don Taylor. It is a handy reference for anyone interested in the birds of Kent, but will perhaps particularly be welcomed by newcomers to the hobby of birdwatching, who can obtain a quite well balanced view of the variety of things which a keen birdwatcher can do in his home county. It is far from dry, and fun to read; and the price is admirably low.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Corrections

VOLUME 77

Page

- 298 IDENTIFICATION OF STINTS AND PEEPS Table 1. Semipalmated Sandpiper: insert ♂ sign in heading to read 'but not ♂ wing'.

VOLUME 78

Pages

- 158 NEWS AND COMMENT Plate 60. Photographer was G. J. Harris (not Royston K. Coles).
 221 THE CHOUGHS OF BARDSEY Fig. 2. Numbering the individuals from 1 at the bottom to 62 at the top, insert letters a to m as follows: 5 = a, 6 = b, 7 = c, 8 = d, 14 = e, 15 = f, 16 = g, 17 = h, 18 = j, 21 = k, 22 = l, 52 = m.
 223 THE CHOUGHS OF BARDSEY Fig. 3. Numbering the individuals from 1 at the bottom to 14 at the top, insert letters a to i as follows: 6 = a, 7 = b, 8 = c, 9 = d, 10 = e, 11 = f, 12 = g, 13 = h, 14 = i.
 398 TERTIAL PATTERNS OF WIGEON AND AMERICAN WIGEON Last line of editorial comment, final sentence should read 'It will, however, not be easy to see'.
 435 MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS 105 Lines 10 & 11 to read: 'Blyth's Reed *A. dumetorum* has a supercilium that may be strong before the eye, but is short, and weak behind the eye'.
 480 MARMORA'S WARBLER: NEW TO BRITAIN AND IRELAND Line 16: 'Norfolk' should read 'Suffolk'.

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R	L	G	G	E	B	A	C	Y	A	S	C	D	F	G	R	L
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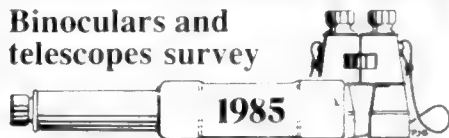
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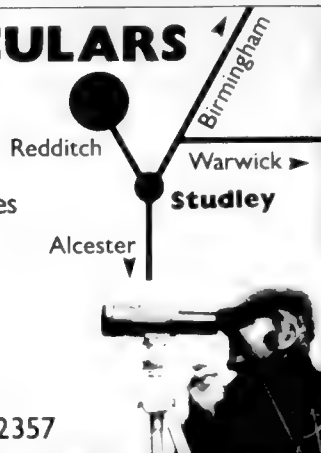
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Front cover: Oystercatchers (Robert Gullmor); the original drawing of this month's cover design is for sale in a postal auction (see page 56 in January issue for procedure).



